

# *JESUS and PROPHECY*



## Contents

Dedication .....	4
Chap 1. Jesus and Prophecy. The Testimony of Jesus .....	5
Chap 2. What is prophecy? .....	9
Chap 3. The language of Prophecy - David's tabernacle .....	14
Chap 4. Typology and Prophecy - Definitions .....	20
Chap 5. Typology and Prophecy – further examples.....	24
Chap 6. Prophecy, Time and Numbers - What not to know? .....	29
Chap 7. Prophecy, Time and Numbers - Literal or spiritual? .....	34
Chap 8. Prophecy, Time and Numbers - Blind guides .....	39
Chap 9. Definitions - Covenants and Jews .....	44
Chap 10. Definitions - The birth of Israel .....	49
Chap 11. Definitions – Israel, a history of disobedience .....	53
Chap 12. Definitions – Israel, punishment and exile .....	59
Chap 13. Definitions – Israel at the time of Christ .....	64
Chap 14. Definitions – The Servant Israel and conversations between God .....	69
Chap 15. Definitions – Anti-Semitism and reprisal against Jews .....	73
Chap 16. Definitions – Anti-Semitism and national restoration .....	78
Chap 17. Definitions - Stephen's rebuke to Israel .....	82
Chap 18. Definitions - The Temple .....	88
Chap 19. Definitions - Jerusalem.....	92
Chap 20. Definitions - Day of the Lord, Last days, Latter days.....	96
Chap 21. The Olivet discourse – 1. The setting .....	100
Chap 22. The Olivet discourse – 2. Wars and rumours of wars .....	105
Chap 23. The Olivet discourse – 3. The satanic forces .....	110
Chap 24. The Olivet discourse – 4. The road to martyrdom.....	115
Chap 25. The Olivet discourse – 5. The history of Daniel .....	120
Chap 26. The Olivet discourse – 6. The 70 year sin .....	125
Chap 27. The Olivet discourse – 7. The abomination of desolation.....	130
Chap 28. The Olivet discourse – 8. Tribulation .....	135
Chap 29. The Olivet discourse – 9. False Christ, false Christianity .....	139
Chap 30. The Olivet discourse – 10. False Prophets, false Prophecy .....	144
Chap 31. The Olivet discourse – 11. Complacency, the disease of the churches .....	150
Chap 32. The Olivet discourse – 12. What music does God like? .....	155

Chap 33. The Olivet discourse – 13. Revival in a declining world .....	160
Chap 34. The Olivet discourse – 14. The coming of Christ .....	165
Chap 35. The Olivet discourse – 15. Has Christ come into you? .....	170
Chap 36. The Olivet discourse – 16. A lost generation? .....	176
Chap 37. The Olivet discourse – 17. Not many are saved .....	182
Chap 38. The Olivet discourse – 18. The rewards of regret and service .....	187
Chap 39. The Apocalypse – 1. It is all about Jesus.....	192
Chap 40. The Apocalypse – 2. Guardians of the Word .....	197
Chap 41. The Apocalypse – 3. The Decrees of God .....	203
Chap 42. The Apocalypse – 4. The elect 144,000 .....	207
Chap 43. The Apocalypse – 5. The fall of Babylon and the devil.....	212
Chap 44. The Apocalypse – 6. The last judgement and eternal life .....	218

**Where Bible version is not stated it is the Authorised Version, otherwise:**

- CEV                      Contemporary English Version
- Darby                  John Nelson Darby Translation
- ERV                    Easy to Read Version
- Geneva                1587 Version
- GNB                    Good News Translation
- GW                     God's Word
- ISV                    International Standard Version
- KJV                    Kings James Version
- LEB                    Lexham English Version
- LITV                  Literal Translation of the Holy Bible
- LXX                    Septuagint
- RSV                    Revised Standard Version
- YLT                    Young's Literal Translation

Scripture quotations are in ***italic script***. All versions can be found in e-Sword

Blessings upon Rick Meyers for e-Sword <http://www.e-sword.net/> Please send him a contribution if you have not already.

## Dedication

Thanks be to Christ who has given us all things pertaining to life and godliness.

Dedicated to those souls who patiently sat through these ministries sharing their thoughts, to those who encouraged me through their ministries, together with those who will also derive benefit from these ministries.

Special thanks to my daughter Shelley for her time spent patiently proofing the text.

Love in Jesus, Mike.

Listen to this series on the Internet Archive <https://archive.org/details/JesusAndProphecy>

Current weekly ministries are posted on Soundcloud <https://soundcloud.com/ministry-mike>

## Chap 1. Jesus and Prophecy. The Testimony of Jesus

**INTRODUCTION.** My thesis for this new series of Jesus and Prophecy, is that Jesus Christ is the focus, the epicentre, the nexus of all prophecy. By that, I mean that all of the prophecy in scripture can only be fully understood with reference to the person and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus is also the lens through which we should view creation, scripture and history, because their true meaning is only discovered when we enter a relationship with Him, as redeemed Sons and Daughters. It is only then that we see with His eye.

There is often great interest in Biblical prophecy because we want to know what will happen in the future (particularly our future) and the result is that we get led into all sorts of speculation and fantasies that lead us away from that centrality in Christ. The Bible starts with Christ the Creator, the Word in the beginning and ends with Christ the King of Kings in eternity. In between is Christ the deliverer. It will be our purpose to show how Jesus is at the heart of prophecy.

It is clear that many today do not see the prophets and their writings in the same way that they were seen when Jesus was born and many of these old prophecies are considered yet to be fulfilled and deferred to a later date.

Commencing with the incarnation of our Lord, what expectations do we see that the Older Testament prophecies aroused in the hearts of the Jewish saints? What we do see is that the Jews were looking for a person and when they saw Jesus, they recognised the fulfilment in Him.

The incarnation of God will be the starting point for our journey through prophecy. It is appropriate because it introduces us to prophecies that we are familiar with from our childhood. Prophecies that came from the little read pages of the old prophets of Israel, seemingly plucked to justify the events before us. There is then here, something that we shall need to understand and that is, how did these oft quoted Messianic prophecies fit into the context of the times in which they were written. That I hope we shall also come to see.

Let us go back to the beginning of the event that has forever changed our lives. For centuries the Jews had been in decline and as a nation. They are, at the birth of Jesus, under the control of the Roman Empire. The Saviour of the world is born during a Roman census, on a journey to pay tax to Caesar. It is hardly auspicious circumstances to inaugurate God's last great revival of the Old Testament. Apart from some mystics, clinking along on their camels through the darkness, following a bright star they had seen in the East, now hovering mysteriously above the little town, nothing stirs. There is nothing to disturb the "dreamless sleep" of Bethlehem of Judea, apart from perhaps a few dogs barking in the silent night. In the hills, if you were up and about, you might have seen some strange lights, where angelic beings had just scared the life out of some shepherds, snuggled by their sheep. If you listened very carefully, you would have heard some angelic choir singing. Apart from that, like any other baby that was born, Jesus entered life almost anonymously and without ceremony. The second coming will be similarly minimalist as we shall see.

This event was foretold in scripture through the virgin birth, *Isa 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.* The town of Bethlehem, "Royal David's city" is named as the birth place. It was also where Rachel,

desperate for children, died giving birth to Benjamin and where Ruth and Boaz conducted their courtship. These were all past relatives of the newborn baby Jesus. *Mic 5:2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.* When Herod was asked about Jesus by the wise men, he was troubled, *Mat 2:3 When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Mat 2:4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. Mat 2:5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: **for thus it is written by the prophet.***

Herod sets out to kill all the young children, to be sure that he exterminates the one who might oppose his dynasty. He is not unaware of the child's royal connection and in doing so Herod fulfils another prophecy, *Mat 2:17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, Mat 2:18 In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.* And in fleeing to Egypt, they fulfilled yet another prophecy, *Mat 2:14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: Mat 2:15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, **Out of Egypt have I called my son.***

This quotation is from Hosea *Hos 11:1 When **Israel was a child**, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.* This scripture clearly identifies Jesus with Israel, the fledgling nation. It further suggests to our minds, by drawing our attention to it, that there is a relationship between the Exodus of Israel from bondage in Egypt and what "Jesus Israel", if I might call the Lord that, was to accomplish through His ministry. The ministry of the Messiah Jesus is by this prophecy, shown to parallel the events that occurred centuries before in ancient Egypt. An Exodus. Which is exactly how Luke records it, *Luk 9:30 And, behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah. Luk 9:31 Appearing in glory, they spoke of **His exodus** (ἐξοδος = exodus), which He was about to **accomplish in Jerusalem.*** LITV.

The Jerusalem Exodus, is the deliverance from the bondage of the Law, *Gal 4:25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. Gal 4:26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.* So we see the spiritual parallels between the Egypt Exodus and Jesus' Exodus. But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

The final prophecy in relation to Jesus birth that Matthew quotes is this. *Mat 2:23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.* It is the first gospel prophecy that is not strictly straightforward. Nazareth is not mentioned in Prophecy. This should act as a caution to our literal expectations of prophecy. The closest match that we can make and the best explanation of the origin of this name appears to be that which traces it to the word נצר = **netzer** in Isaiah chapter 11, **the branch**, of which the prophet there says, *Isa 11:1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a **Branch** shall grow out of his roots: Isa 11:2 And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;*

Why we ask is Jesse a stump? Jesse is the father of David and according to Matthew's genealogical list (Mat 1:1 ff) Jesus is a descendant through Joseph. Luke (Lk3:23 ff) traces the genealogy through Mary who also shares with Joseph, Jesse as an ancestor. The royal line effectively died out at the

captivity as far as rulers were concerned, so no one of the house of David was a King from that time forward. The great family tree had been cut down by the Babylonians. Yet it was not dead. A branch would come out of the stump. Great David's greater son would emerge.

Later when Jesus was brought to Jerusalem and to the Temple for the first time, there was an old man waiting in expectation of his arrival. He was called Simeon. I imagine that there were a few generations of people who waited for this day but died before it came. Is this a fulfilment of *Mal 3:1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.* Could this prophecy be fulfilled more than once?

The prophecy that did get fulfilled was this one, *Isa 60:1 Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. Isa 60:2 For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. Isa 60:3 And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Isa 60:4 Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Isa 60:5 Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.*

Simeon has no doubt whatsoever that this was the Saviour. Clearly, his Jewish expectation was **not** of a full grown, full blown man Messiah. **The baby fitted the bill perfectly.** The Spirit bore witness in his soul and he sings, *Luk 2:29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: Luk 2:30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Luk 2:31 Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; Luk 2:32 A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.* He had other prophetic support, *Isa 49:6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.* So the magnificent plan unfolds in a very simple and humble manner.

It was as I was preparing this series that a thought occurred to me. Sitting in my library, surrounded by commentaries, theologies, concordances, dictionaries, high speed internet and instant access to dozens of translations of the scriptures, I sighed and thought how fortunate I was to have such a wealth of learning to refer to. Then, casting my eye back to the New Testament times, I was about to feel very sorry for those souls who lacked such things. I considered how few could read, how few had time to read if they could, how scriptures were rationed to the synagogues and the enlightened scribes and how only a few Jews could write their own memoranda to record what they heard. It was all in the memory or nothing. I mused further, that it was strange that if commentaries on the scriptures were so important, why do we not find the Apostles looking at the sayings of Jesus and commenting on them? Perhaps I had missed something very important? Or perhaps, I should be very careful when listening to other people's interpretation of the words of Jesus?

It seemed that if these old saints could live the lives of disciples, without the tools that I possess, I must be really dumb and they must have been really smart! Or could there be another explanation? Could it be that we make the scriptures too complex, introducing difficulties that do not exist, trying to make more of it than is implied or use supposed scholarship to mystify rather than clarify? I think that we have, especially where the subject of prophecy is concerned. I remembered William

Tyndale's remark to an ignorant priest, "If God spare my life, before very long I shall cause a plough boy to know the scriptures better than you do!"

**Let me therefore state a guiding principle** at the start of this series, namely that the scriptures and in particular, prophecy, have Jesus as their focus. *Rev 19:10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: **for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*** That is, the testimony of Jesus, or the Gospel which John and his brethren had, as John Gill eloquently puts it:

"is the very spirit, life, and soul of the prophecy of this book; for as **all the prophets bore witness to Christ**, so does the Spirit of God in this".

Let me put it another way. If we want to understand prophecy, we need to understand Jesus and His mission. *Joh 8:56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.*

The Scriptures testify, that is, bear witness to the Messiah. *Joh 5:37 And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. Joh 5:38 And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Joh 5:39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: **and they are they which testify of me.** Joh 5:40 And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. Joh 5:45 Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. Joh 5:46 For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: **for he wrote of me.** Joh 5:47 **But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?***

Those disciples on the Emmaus road, after the crucifixion, had totally misunderstood the plan of God as it related to Jesus. They had a totally different expectation. They had not understood that through the Crucifixion Jesus had redeemed Israel. They were like so many today, looking for an earthly rather than a spiritual redemption? *Luk 24:21 But **we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel:** and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. Luk 24:22 Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; Luk 24:23 And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. Luk 24:24 And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. Luk 24:25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Luk 24:26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? Luk 24:27 **And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things CONCERNING HIMSELF.***

Did they appreciate this? Even when Jesus departs, they still ask about a restored Israel, *Act 1:6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? Act 1:7 And he said unto them, **It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.*** The question is answered by a warning which we will come back to and that is, we are cautioned against date fixing. It says nothing about a restored Nation of Israel. Why should Israel need restoring, when it is restored in Christ? *Gal 6:15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. Gal 6:16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon **the Israel of God.***



God willing, we shall show later that the Israel of God continues in an unbroken succession of true believers from the Old Testament Church to the New Testament Church, because it is one and the same church. I wish to emphasise this point in closing. The scriptures begin at the beginning with the Creator and His creation, they end with the Final Judgement. In between is the history of redemption with Christ the deliverer manifest in His many typical guises, the Ark of Noah, the Tabernacle of Moses, The Mercyseat, The Angel in the wilderness, the sacrificial Lamb of God and many, many more. Each and every emblem is prophesying Christ. Christ is there all the way from the beginning to the end, if you will receive it. What greater subject to occupy our attention and worship? Paul expresses it eloquently, *Col 3:11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.*

Stephen, when recounting the history of Israel makes this statement, *Act 7:51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Act 7:52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:* The purpose of the Prophets was to show Christ and we will do well to concentrate our minds on looking for the same Christ. If we find difficulty, then let us look even harder for Jesus.

My advice as we proceed is to remind ourselves, when we are tempted to fantasise scripture, when we let our minds speculate wildly about other things, let us ask whether we are really looking to Jesus or are just being distracted from His presence. Golden calves do not substitute for Christ. Let me say clearly, my personal salvation is independent of the sequence of the events of the last time, whatever those events are, and when those events occur. I shall in all probability have gone to glory by then. You and I can do nothing about the events. Whether our guesses are right or wrong, it will not hinder Jesus' progress one bit and for those who are saved, they will be delivered. We have one duty in respect of this and it is "not to fall asleep on the job". Our lives are to be spent **in anticipation of Christ and nothing else**. In that we follow the examples of those who anticipated the birth of Jesus.

To some extent, prophecy acts as an alarm, a wake up call, to bring us back to what we should be focusing on, so that we are ready to meet the Lord. *Mar 13:36 Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.* Surely Christ would not leave you behind? My friend, if the King of Kings was coming to collect you, would you keep him waiting because you couldn't be bothered to be ready? I have known lots of people like that and they become a liability, an irritation and a nuisance. You see, they have no respect for you or your time. If punctuality is the politeness of Kings, the believer's attitude is one of readiness. If you want to be like the people in Noah's day, carrying on as if nothing will happen, the day will take you by surprise. The outcome is obvious.

## Chap 2. What is prophecy?

I reiterate what we have said about the core of prophecy, that is, *Rev 19:10.....the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.* That is, the testimony of Jesus, or the Gospel which John and his brethren had is the very spirit, life, and soul of the prophecy of this book; for as all the prophets bore witness to Christ, so does the Spirit of God in this, as Gill so very well put it. With this in mind, let us look at

the nature of prophecy in more detail. The word prophecy means simply to “before speak”<sup>1</sup>. In many minds it is considered as predicting or seeing the future, to speak of events before they happen and yet it is much more than this.

Prophets were originally called seers, *1Sa 9:9 (Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer (ראה = râ'âh to see).* They saw things, not just future but present, things in the heart, *1Sa 9:19 And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I am the seer: go up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me to day, and to morrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thine heart.* Prophecy is about revelation, revealing things which are not generally known, even things in the present, things of the heart. Jesus reveals something in the life of the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar, which cause her to consider Him a prophet, *Joh 4:17 The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: Joh 4:18 For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. Joh 4:19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.* Jesus sees into her life.

Prophets also discern needs. *Act 11:28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Act 11:29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea.* Agabus also foretold Saul’s imprisonment and so I suppose prepared him for that. *Act 21:10 And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. Act 21:11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.*

In a more general sense Prophecy is given to encourage and build believers. *1Co 14:1 Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy ..... 1Co 14:3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.* The Prophet is a particular gift of Christ to the Church, *Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.* In the above examples, I do not see any reason to believe that Prophets have ceased to exist or why they would cease to exist.

Mark this also, there are some who talk about “gifts” as Apostolic gifts. Where did it say that in your Bible? They are gifts of The Spirit. Just as an aside, have you noticed, that despite the plurality of those gifts to the church in Ephesians and that we still have the same needs today, that we live in an age dominated by “Pastors”. Pastors who do everything. These are the product of the Institutional Church that turns them out in Pastor factories called colleges. Where are the schools of the Prophets? *1Sa 19:20 Saul sent messengers to get David. But when they saw a group of prophets prophesying with Samuel serving as their leader, God's Spirit came over Saul's messengers so that*

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<sup>1</sup> Προφητεία (prophēteia) from πρό (pro) = a preposition meaning “fore”, in front of, prior and φημί (phēmi) = speak.

*they also prophesied. And let us not forget the prayer of Moses, Num 11:29 ..... would God that all the LORD'S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!*

What is the source of prophecy? 2Pe 1:20 *First, you must understand this: No prophecy in Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation. 2Pe 1:21 **No prophecy ever originated from humans.** Instead, it was **given by the Holy Spirit** as humans spoke under God's direction.* GW. True prophecy like scripture is inspired by God. 2Ti 3:16 *every Writing is God-breathed, and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for setting aright, for instruction that is in righteousness, 2Ti 3:17 that the man of God may be fitted--for every good work having been completed.* YLT. It is nothing to do with what a human feels about something, what they think the Lord might do, what their best guess is about things to come, it is about what God Himself has said about things. It is about revelations from the Creator Himself, knowledge shared by God. It is what theologians called "The Divine Afflatus", the miraculous communication of Divine knowledge.

There will be many seemingly credible prophets who are false prophets. *Mat 24:24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.* They will show signs and wonders. So signs and wonders are clearly no proof that they are genuine prophets. Have you noticed that many people are sceptical today about miracles and signs and wonders from God? They will relegate them to works of the devil. *2Th 2:8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: 2Th 2:9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.* Why, if the devil works signs should we not believe that Christ also does the same?

How then are we to discern true from false? I think that we must develop a healthy scepticism. Do not believe everything you hear without testing it. Thomas has for millennia been called "doubting Thomas", yet his scepticism was justified. *1Jn 4:1 Beloved, **believe not every spirit**, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. 1Jn 4:2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit **that confesseth that Jesus Christ** is come in the flesh is of God: 1Jn 4:3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and **this is that spirit of antichrist**, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.* Jesus Christ is the standard by which we judge prophecy.

The false prophet has the spirit of antichrist and we should try the attitude of these people towards Christ. To do this of course, we need to have some knowledge against which we can test them. For many disciples, those who seldom search the scriptures, it would be a difficult task. The false prophets will capitalise on ignorance and gullibility. However, if what people are trying to put over to you, doesn't agree with the accounts of scripture, especially in relation to Christ, then beware their pronouncements about prophecy.

Let me give you an example. I believe that the so called Jehovah's Witnesses are a misled group of people that have brought in false prophecy. They make great effort to show that Christ is a created being and "a god", not God Himself. To believe this, you must discard many scriptures, such as this one, *Isa 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, **The mighty God**, The*

*everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.* They teach that there are two groups of Christ's people, those who go to heaven (144,000) and those who inherit the new earth. If you ask them to show where in the NT these divisions are taught, they can offer you no answer. You see, believers are already in heaven. *Eph 2:5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)* *Eph 2:6 And hath raised us up together, and **made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus**:* Believers are one people from both the Old and the New covenants, *Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.* *Gal 3:29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye **Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.***

Now here is a real test for the JW's. My advice is when you meet them and they start with their well rehearsed patter, stop them and ask them this. You see, they are claiming to bring "god" to you, so it is only reasonable that they must know Him. Ask them to give you their testimony of Christ's saving grace. Do not venture anywhere else until you get an answer. What you will find is that they do not have a testimony of saving grace. They are not in Christ. They look to a future forgiveness and that is based on works that they do, not grace. They are unregenerate and unwashed in the blood of Christ. These people have a false view of Christ and will have a false view of prophecy.

False views of Christ will lead to distorted views of prophecy and we must remember to keep looking at Jesus, *Heb 12:2 We must keep our **eyes on Jesus**, who leads us and makes our faith complete.* CEV. When we look at Jesus, we see the Perfect Prophet, The Archetypal Prophet, the Model Prophet. It was someone to which the people of Israel looked as they anticipated the Messiah. *Joh 6:14 When the people saw the miracle Jesus performed, they said, "This man is certainly **the prophet who is to come into the world.**"* *Joh 6:15 Jesus realized that the people intended to take him by force **and make him king.** So he returned to the mountain by himself.* He had not come to rule an earthly nation. Why would He do so in the future, as some think, when His Kingdom is now in Heaven and not of this world?

To understand this view that the Jews had adopted, that Jesus was "that" prophet, we must return to the time of Moses. The Israelites were scared of Jehovah and not without good reason. They therefore requested that God provide an intermediary. What they were really doing was rejecting God speaking directly to them. *Deu 18:16 According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, **Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.*** *Deu 18:17 And the LORD said unto me, **They have well spoken that which they have spoken.*** It was, I think, little different to the rejection of God as the King of Israel, *1Sa 10:19 And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us.*

Men do not like answering directly to their Creator and will try to avoid Him. In the beginning they sought to by-pass Him to gain the knowledge of good and evil. They did and still do seek people to reveal the future and they are absorbed in their horoscopes, diviners and mediums. A mark of apostasy is that men do not go to God for knowledge.

God's concession to Israel was to raise a prophet like Moses. *Deu 18:18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; **and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.** Deu 18:19 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, **I will require it of him.*** There was then an expectation in Israel, that prophets would be of the stature and character of Moses. Yet in this was also embedded a deeper thought, that a new deliverer, a new Moses would arise. Although God had spoken through the prophets, great men such as Jeremiah, Isaiah, indeed all the prophets (Minor and Major), none had arisen that matched the stature of Moses. There must have been something extremely unique about the presence of Christ that convinced men that this was "that" Prophet spoken of by Moses.

Here Moses defines the false Prophet. *Deu 18:20 But **the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.** Deu 18:21 And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? Deu 18:22 When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, **if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.***

Here is the heart of the true prophet. He speaks for God, whether that is speaking of the past, speaking of the present or speaking of the future. I would also say that it involves speaking what God says without interpretation or explanation.

Now a lesson about being a prophet. It relates to event that occurred immediately after the death of Solomon and the division of the Kingdom. Jeroboam is king of Israel and Rehoboam King of Judah. Jeroboam has set up altars to Baal and is corrupting the worship of the people. To him, God sends a prophet.

**Please Read 1 Kings 13:1 ff.**

The unnamed prophet was given clear instructions to deliver the message and go home, *1Ki 13:9 For so was it charged me by the word of the LORD, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest. 1Ki 13:10 So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Bethel.* We might ask why was that so important to go home a different way? The message was the message, what it was about, surely? Which way you go home is neither here nor there? Clearly it was important to the Lord and I think that it was given in this way as a lesson to us about prophecy and one we should clearly take notice of.

Firstly, the message and the delivery of the message are equally important. The attendant circumstances of the prophecy, the context of the prophecy are an integral part of the prophecy. As we look at Christ in the Scriptures, we need to understand the context in which those prophecies were given. If we are looking at the prophecies of Isaiah, we must understand the context of Isaiah's prophecy not just the words.

Secondly, it was all well and good that the unnamed prophet gave the prophecy but it was a bad example of serving the giver of the prophecy when he disobeyed the orders to go home.

Disobedience, whether by Jeroboam or the unnamed prophet were unacceptable and a lesson was being laid down by God. If God tells you to do something, He doesn't change His mind about what He asked you to do. This of course is no longer accepted today, because in our age, we are constantly changing the things that God has told us to do. Things that once mattered are no longer important or the same. That was just the attitude Saul took when he decided that God needed a sacrifice from the spoils of war, not the destruction of those spoils. Disobedience cost him a kingdom.

Thirdly, God's messages are not revoked. *Gal 1:8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. Gal 1:9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.* Let us with the Apostle say Amen to that and may this be on the generation in our day who do the same, a cursed generation. The lying prophet who came out to test the man of God has given us a lesson in obedience.

That said, the message of the word that the prophet gave remained through history and even though he disobeyed, his bones were not defiled. *1Ki 13:31 And it came to pass, after he had buried him, that he spake to his sons, saying, When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre wherein the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones: 1Ki 13:32 For the saying which he cried by the word of the LORD against the altar in Bethel, and against all the houses of the high places which are in the cities of Samaria, shall surely come to pass ..... 2Ki 23:15 Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove. 2Ki 23:16 And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that were there in the mount, and sent, and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burned them upon the altar, and polluted it, according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words. 2Ki 23:17 Then he said, What title is that that I see? And the men of the city told him, It is the sepulchre of the man of God, which came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the altar of Bethel. 2Ki 23:18 And he said, Let him alone; let no man move his bones. So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet that came out of Samaria.*

Summary: Prophecy can be seeing the present. True prophecy comes from Divine revelation. Signs and wonders do not prove authenticity. False views of Christ will lead to false views on prophecy. Prophecy is not all about predicting future events. The prophet is a gift to the Church.

In preparation for the next chapter, please read the Book of Joel (Yes, the whole book, it is only 3 chapters).

### Chap 3. The language of Prophecy - David's tabernacle

When you read the prophecies of the Older Testament, I think that you are often given to expect a more dramatic outcome because of the magnificent prose. *Joe 3:14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. Joe 3:15 The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. Joe 3:16 The LORD also shall*

*roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but **the LORD will be the hope of his people**, and the strength of the children of Israel. Joe 3:17 So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more.*

We may be tempted to look for a fulfilment that is in an earthly Zion, an earthly Jerusalem and with an earthly Israel. In other words, a fulfilment that is on this earth, restoring the glories of the ancient kingdom of Israel. Because this never happened some think that it is still to come. Statements as “The day of the Lord”, “The sun and moon darkened”, “Dwelling in Zion” and “Jerusalem be Holy” become futuristic. Is this so?

We would hope to learn more by establishing when and why Joel is writing but little is known about Joel and the exact date at which he gives his prophecy. It is also a peculiarity of the OT that some well known prophets that we can date, left no books (Elijah, Elisha, Michaiah), whereas others (Jonah, Joel, Obadiah) wrote books but their dating is uncertain. It is suggested that Joel is writing some time before Judah goes into captivity (Israel are already taken away) but it is not proven.

Why we ask is Joel giving this prophecy? If it was a voice of hope for his day, they never experienced the blessings, because that was to come generations in the future. We do know however, that it is authentic, as it is validated in the NT. So it had more meaning for a future generation than for its own day. The language of Joel’s prophecy elicits an anticipation in the ears of the hearers. It creates an expectation, indeed a magnificent expectation, an expectation that seems unmissable because of the nature of the events described in prophecy. Does prophesy overstate the case? Is God encouraging us to anticipate more than He will deliver? Or is the Creator using symbolic language, language containing metaphors to hide the prophecy? *Hos 12:10 And I have spoken unto the prophets, And I have multiplied vision, **And by the hand of the prophets I use similes.*** YLT. Prophetic language is not always straightforward.

Peter quotes Joel on the day of Pentecost. *Act 2:16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; Act 2:17 And it shall come to pass in **the last days**, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon **all flesh**: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: Act 2:18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and **they shall prophesy**: Act 2:19 And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; **blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke**: Act 2:20 **The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood**, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: Act 2:21 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For Peter it is the “**last days**” and Act 2:16 ... *this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel*; it could not be clearer. Joel was talking about what was happening on the day God pours His Spirit out, on the day of Pentecost.*

The speaking in tongues was the fulfilment of the word that God’s servants would prophecy. *Act 2:11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.* Gods servants would speak to all nations of His wonderful works. It was the wonderful works, **not tongues** which was important. It was the day that they received the Power to take the gospel to the world. *Act 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. **The “tongues” phenomenon was in this case an example of Prophecy.***

Let us just examine one part of this prophecy and its language, *Act 2:20 **The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come.*** Was the sun darkened and did the moon turn to blood? Should we expect the events spoken of, to all occur on the day of Pentecost? No, because it is “**in those days**” not “on that day”. In those days, in fact at the crucifixion, the sun was darkened. Passover was on a full moon but we have no record of what happened to the moon. *Luk 23:44 And it was about the sixth hour, and **there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.*** *Luk 23:45 And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.*

Signs point to something and we should also ask what these signs mean? What does the sign point to? Is the natural event the fulfilment or is there something else that we should also be seeing? Imagine this. John the Baptist announces the Lamb of God. The crowd look at each other in puzzlement, then a voice says, “What’s John on today?” “That’s not a Lamb, it’s a man”. They didn’t of course because they understood quite clearly, the analogy. This was the sacrifice of God, the lamb of God, which now supersedes all of the other sacrifices. Descriptions of the Divine are not always literal but metaphorical (a figure of speech in which a term or phrase is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable, **in order to suggest a resemblance**). It is possible that these statements are given to link different prophecies by using the same imagery, not just to declare natural events?

Let us use our prime directive, “**The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy**” to interpret this section of Joel’s prophecy. Let us look for Jesus in this.

#### **Please Read Revelation Chapter 21.**

The New Jerusalem is not built “among those dark satanic mills” of William Blake. *Rev 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.* *Rev 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, **new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*** The new Jerusalem is the bride of Christ, the Church. *Eph 5:24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.* *Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.* Note, it is the Church **not Israel** that is the bride of Christ and as she is gathering the Saints for that great day when the heavenly Temple is opened and there is no need for created lights any more. The Sun will truly be darkened.

*Rev 21:22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.* *Rev 21:23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* *Rev 21:23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* The arrival of Christ removes all necessity of those created objects that governed Congregations and seasons, *Gen 1:14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:* Remember, Time no longer exists in heaven, neither the objects that regulated time and worship. Sun and moon have lost their need to shine. It is the Day of Christ’s glory. If Peter had not interpreted Joel, would we have understood the language to refer to Christ’s day or a later day?



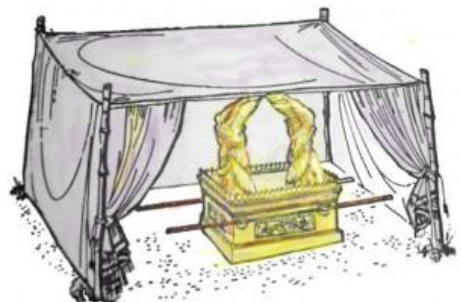
Lets us look at another example of the language of prophecy. Amo 9:9 *For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.* Amo 9:10 *All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.* Amo 9:11 *In that day will I **raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen**, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old:* Amo 9:12 *That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this.*

There are many who think that this event is scheduled for the future. On first glance it is difficult to understand when it was fulfilled. Yet again we are blessed by the Apostle James to see it was referring to the days of the Apostle. It was written by Amos to solve a future dispute. The Apostles are having a problem with Pharisees (yes, Pharisees became disciples) about the gentiles not keeping the laws of Moses. Act 15:5 *But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to **keep the law of Moses**.* James stands up and says, Act 15:14 *Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.* Act 15:15 *And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,* Act 15:16 *After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: Act 15:17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.*

Let me try to explain the meaning and use of this. In order to do so, we need to understand what “The tabernacle of David”, the “Tent of David”, was. It is NOT the Tabernacle of Moses. They are two totally distinct objects.

This is how the Tabernacle of David came into existence. We must go back to the days of Eli and Samuel when the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark was at that time in the Tabernacle of Moses in Shiloh but was taken into battle by the Israelites who promptly lost it to the Philistines. 1Sa 4:11 *And **the ark of God was taken**; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.....*1Sa 6:1 *And the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months.* After this the Ark eventually found its way back to Israel and in time was taken by David into Jerusalem after a stay with Obed Edom (servant of Edom/Adam).

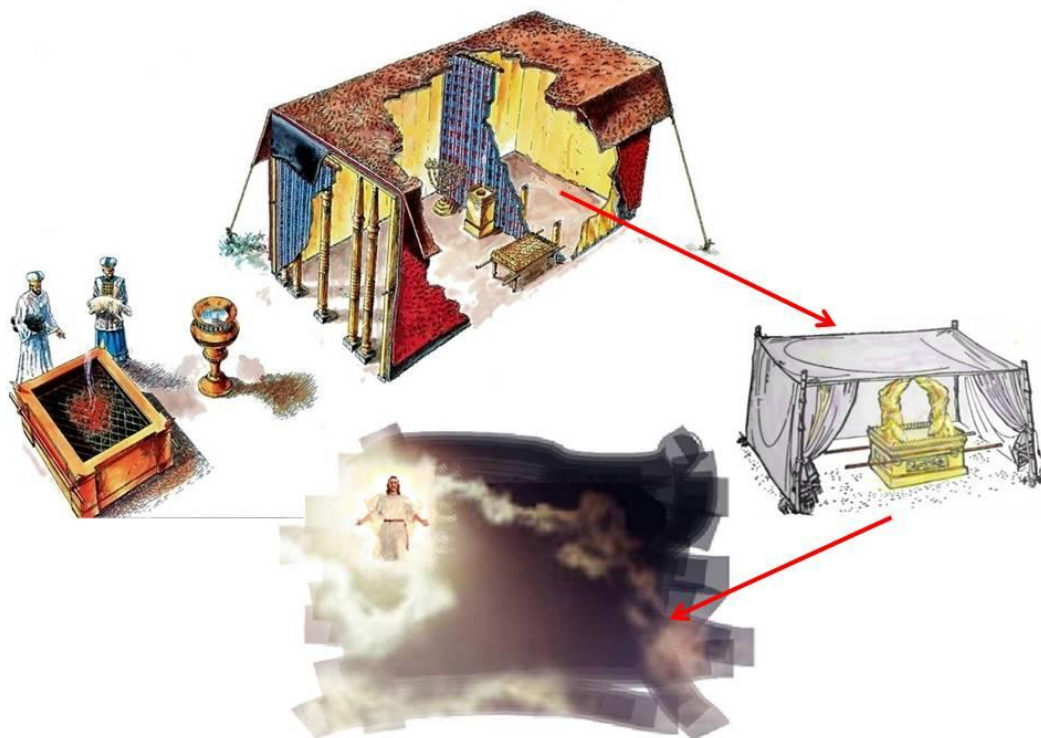
1Ch 13:12 *And David was afraid of God that day, saying, How shall I bring the ark of God home to me? 1Ch 13:13 So David brought not the ark home to himself to the city of David, but carried it aside into the house of Obededom the Gittite. 1Ch 13:14 And the ark of God remained with the family of Obededom in his house three months. And the LORD blessed the house of Obededom, and all that he had. David prepared a place for the ark in Jerusalem. 1Ch 15:1 And David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, **and pitched for it a tent.** 2Ch 1:4 *But the ark of God had David brought up from Kirjathjearim to the place which David had prepared for it: for he had pitched a tent for it at Jerusalem. You recall that David brought the Ark in with great ceremony and joy. 2Sa 6:13 And it was so, that when they that**



*bare the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings. 2Sa 6:14 And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod.*

The question arises as to why David did not put the Ark in the Tabernacle of Moses, where it originally resided? Little is known as to what happened to the original Tabernacle after the defeat of Israel and the extinction of worship at Shiloh. The Tabernacle may have been at Nob where the Priests were, *1Sa 21:1 Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why art thou alone, and no man with thee?* It was where the shewbread was, *1Sa 21:6 So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.* We assume by this the Tabernacle was at Nob.

Later we find it in Gibeon. We also see a clear split in the service and worship, between ministering before the ark and sacrificial worship. *1Ch 16:37 So he left there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD Asaph and his brethren, to minister before the ark continually, as every day's work required: 1Ch 16:38 And Obededom with their brethren, threescore and eight; Obededom also the son of Jeduthun and Hosah to be porters: 1Ch 16:39 And Zadok the priest, and his brethren the priests, before the tabernacle of the LORD in the high place that was at Gibeon. 1Ch 16:40 To offer burnt offerings unto the LORD upon the altar of the burnt offering continually morning and evening, and to do according to all that is written in the law of the LORD, which he commanded Israel.*



So, the point that I am making is that the Tabernacle of David, in the City of David, was erected to hold only the Ark of the Covenant and that the Tabernacle of Moses (or something resembling it after all its journeys) was at Gibeon where the sacrificial laws were upheld. Do you see what has happened? There is a separation between the sacrificial service of the law and the service to God. The ceremonial sacrificial laws are separated from the Ark of the Covenant (and the Mercy Seat).

The Tabernacle of Moses no longer has a Holy of Holies to meet God, the Holy of Holies is now in David's Tabernacle. The Ark of the Covenant has moved home, the covenant in a manner of speaking has shifted from the law to the gospel.

It foreshadows this. *Heb 9:6 Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always **into the first tabernacle**, accomplishing the service of God. Heb 9:7 But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: Heb 9:8 The Holy Ghost this signifying, that **the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing**: Heb 9:9 Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Heb 9:10 Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. Heb 9:11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, **by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building**; Heb 9:12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. Heb 9:13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: Heb 9:14 **How much more shall the blood of Christ**, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

In this lies the importance of the prophecy of Amos. If the gentiles sought after God, then they could worship in the Tabernacle of David where worship had been simplified, so to speak. If the Pharisees wanted to continue with the ceremonial law of Moses, that was their business but they could not impose it on others. This Tabernacle of David was not involved in the Mosaic sacrificial worship, *Act 15:19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: Act 15:20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. Act 15:21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.*

The erection of the Tabernacle of David was a seminal moment in the Older Testament and its symbolism is not lost in the New. Remember that when James speaks, the Temple of Herod is still standing and it is some 20 years in the future before it is destroyed, so the text does not refer to rebuilding the earthly Temple. James is referring back to the Tent that David built that contained the Ark of the Covenant. I am suggesting that James sees the rebuilding of the Tabernacle of David as confirming the work of Christ on behalf of the gentiles and being a figure of the resurrection of Jesus. *Joh 2:18 Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Joh 2:19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple (**ναός = Naos = shrine**), and in three days I will raise it up. Joh 2:20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? Joh 2:21 But he spake of the temple (**ναός = Naos = shrine**), of his body. It is to Christ that "the residue of men seek", not an old tent made by David. It is to great David's greater Son that men must look.*

I hope that you will see from these illustrations some guidelines when reading prophecy. **Firstly**, Prophecy is made far simpler when we see it in the light of the person and work of Christ. I have called it our prime directive, "**The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy**". **Secondly**, there is no reason to believe that where it has been fulfilled that it needs a second fulfilment. **Thirdly**, prophecy

is better understood if we see it in context, rather than just in its fulfilment. I mean that if we can understand the circumstances and history of when it was given and the circumstance and history of where it is fulfilled, we shall have a deeper understanding of its meaning. **Fourthly**, the prophetic language is often symbolic although there may be literal fulfilments. Context will help determine this.

**Finally**, it is important to have an understanding of scripture and the history of scripture. If an old Galilean fisherman without a formal education and none of the tools at our disposal could quote the OT in context, I ask, what is our excuse? A bit less time on the things of this world and a bit more time in the things of God and we will realise what this scripture means, *Zec 12:8 In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them. Zec 12:9 And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.* Christians have for too long focused on the NT to the neglect of the OT.

## Chap 4. Typology and Prophecy - Definitions

We have already touched upon this subject in our last ministry and I want to take it further. Let me first define Typology and then let me show that it is a scriptural concept. Typology is the study of symbols, subjects, emblems, examples, forms or figures that foreshadow or exist before the reality is fully revealed. For example, *Col 2:16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Col 2:17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.*

In other words, the Sabbath was a shadow cast by the person of Christ. It prefigures the “rest of God” in Christ. *Heb 4:9 There remaineth therefore a rest (σαββατισμός sabbatismos) to the people of God. Heb 4:10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.*

The word type (τύπος *typos*) is from the Greek word meaning a die (as struck) or stamp, pattern or print. Do you remember the old type writers that had metal arms with the letters of the alphabet embossed upon them. As the arm struck the ink ribbon, it left the print of the type on the paper. The print on the paper is the anti-type. Christ will be the primary focus of our Typology in this study although there are other types.

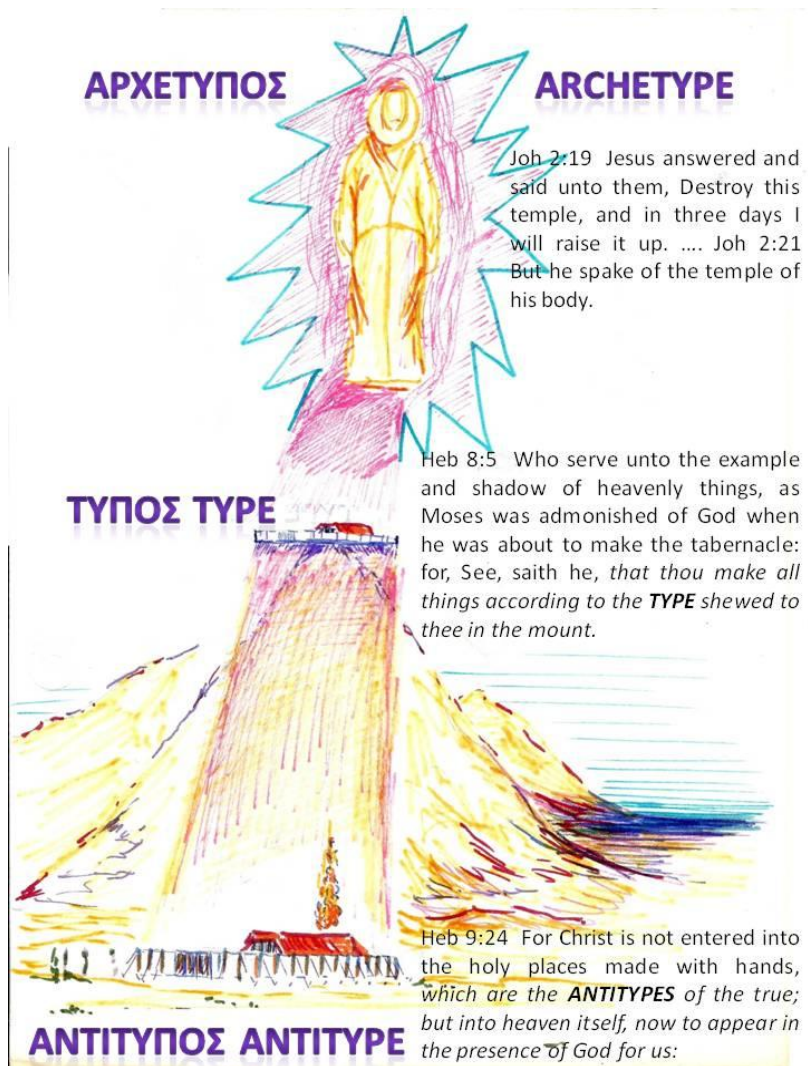
When we say Christ is the type, the pattern, for example, the Sabbath would be the antitype. The Sabbath was a shadow of the reality. *Col 2:16 ..... the sabbath days: Col 2:17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.* Adam is however, called a type of Christ simply from the viewpoint that he came before Christ, although technically speaking, he is an antitype, because he was modelled upon Christ. I suppose it is a matter of perspective. If you are looking forward from Adam to Christ, Adam is a type of Christ. If you are looking from Christ back to Adam, Christ is the type of Adam. So as not to overly confuse and to maintain consistency, I will be talking about “The Types of Christ” as the figures of Christ rather than antitypes of Christ. Jesus is more correctly the “Archetype” or “Prototype” of the shadowy figures in the Older Testament.



Now we shall see that this word “type” actually appears in scripture. *Act 7:44 Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the **fashion (tupos)** that he had seen.*

*Heb 8:5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the **pattern (tupos)** shewed to thee in the mount. Rom 5:14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the **figure (tupos)** of him that was to come. 1Co 10:11 Now all these things happened unto them for **ensamples (tupos)**: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*

Antitypes also appear in scripture. *Heb 9:24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the **antitypes** (ἀντίτυπον antitupon = counterpart) of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: 1Pe 3:20 .... eight souls, were saved through water. 1Pe 3:21 Which **antitype** now also saves us, baptism... Baptism was an antitype.*



**I will go further and suggest that “types” are another form of prophecy.** Types prophesy about Christ in that they speak out about Him. Types are objects and people, who by their purpose and actions, speak about Christ and His glorious person and works. They are witnesses to Christ and the progress of the Gospel. Suddenly, behind the story and events we are reading of in the scripture, we catch a glimpse of Jesus waiting in the wings to take centre stage and reveal the reality of what we read. I remembered those time fillers, pictures books from my childhood that contained drawings in which were concealed objects and people. You had to look hard to find them but once you saw it, it became glaringly obvious. I think that Typology is like that.

Jesus is found throughout the scriptures. We know this because He told us so. *Luk 24:27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.* The subject that Jesus chose to educate the disciples with on the Emmaus road

was Jesus. Nothing else was more important for them to know but Him. Think about that, especially when you are led to fantasise about the end times. Is it Jesus you look for or spectacular worldly events.

Starting then at the very beginning of the Bible, we shall see types of Christ. These symbols and images travel with us as we journey through scripture. They are also part of that great message that the Messiah carries from Genesis to the end of Time, namely the Gospel, the good news. Yes the Gospel was in the OT with Jesus. *Gal 3:8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before **the gospel unto Abraham**, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. Rom 10:16 But they have not all obeyed **the gospel**. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? Mar 1:15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and **believe the gospel**.* What is the Gospel? It is simply expressed in the words of Paul to the Corinthians and I think that it is best summary and description of the gospel.

*1Co 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you **the gospel which I preached unto you**, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 1Co 15:2 **By which also ye are saved**, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 1Co 15:3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 1Co 15:4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: 1Co 15:5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: 1Co 15:6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. 1Co 15:7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.*

The Gospel is a prophecy about the work of Christ. The first declaration was made when God pronounced judgement on the devil. It is also known as the “Protevelangel” or “Protevelangelium”. *Gen 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her **seed**; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* It is the declaration of war between the seed of Christ and the seed of the devil, between the believer and the unbeliever, between the elect and the reprobate. *Mat 13:38 The field is the world; **the good seed are the children of the kingdom**; but the **tares are the children of the wicked one**; Mat 13:39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; Psa 68:21 But God shall wound the head of his enemies. Rom 16:20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.*

The Gospel may be summarised as this, “That where there is sin, misery, despair and hopelessness, there is in this life always a way out, some Good News, the Gospel”. In the darkest moments of the lives of men, God has delivered them, He has saved them. Out of the darkness comes the light of the Gospel and when sin appears. *Rom 5:20 ..... But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: Rom 5:21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.* So we would expect, right at the beginning, when sin entered that we would see God’s grace in Eden. We are not disappointed, as Paul says, *Eph 3:9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, **which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God**, who created all things by Jesus Christ:*

Eden is a type of Paradise. The Revelation of John makes the link between Eden and Paradise through the Tree of Life. *Rev 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is **in the midst of the paradise of God**.* Eden was a type of heaven itself. It was the place where God had placed the

pinnacle of His creation, man and where man was given the responsibility as God's vicegerent<sup>2</sup> to exercise authority over creation. Man bore the image of heaven, of the Creator, the image of Christ and that is why God is "mindful of him" as David said. Adam is a type of Christ, *1Co 15:44 ..... There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. 1Co 15:45 And so it is written, The **first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.***

Typology shows us first **the natural events that lead secondarily to the spiritual events**. We gather another principle which will guide our prophetic understanding which I will use as our **Second Principle**, *1Co 15:46 Howbeit that was not **first which is spiritual**, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. 1Co 15:47 The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.* This principle must lead us to question some of the prophetic views that take the position, first the natural, then **again** the natural and finally the spiritual. We shall DV examine this when we consider views that hold the re-establishment of the "natural Israel", the "natural Temple" and the "natural Jewish worship". Keep this principle in mind.

I would like to suggest a speculative thought. It is, that all that God created had its origin in heavenly realities. They too were patterns of heavenly things. From trees to shrubs, animals and birds, reptiles and fish, all creatures great and small. Why do I suggest this? It is because there is in each one to be found, the manifold Wisdom of God. Solomon saw that Creation was full of Wisdom. *1Ki 4:32 And he spake **three thousand proverbs**: and his songs were a thousand and five. 1Ki 4:33 And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes.* Heaven's wisdom is declared in Creation and the things of heaven can be seen in Creation. *Rom 1:20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:*

Next time that you look at a tree, think about what it stands for and why it has been created. *Gen 2:9 And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is **pleasant to the sight, and good for food.*** They were made so that we could enjoy their beauty. They are not just food but for the delight of the eyes. In this, I think that trees reflect the "tree of life" who is none other than Jesus. *Joh 14:6 Jesus said to him, I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.* LITV. Jesus is the beauty of the Lord. *Psa 27:4 One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, **to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.*** I hope that you will never see trees the same way again.

In Eden, the tree of life is a type of Christ, the Cherubim also are part of Christ and the Coverings for "the shame of their nakedness" that God made through sacrifice, are types of Christ. The way to the tree of life was guarded by the Cherubims, just as the Mercy seat, overshadowed by Cherubims, could not be approached without the blood of a sacrifice. No man ever gets to the Tree of Life without passing through with the sacrifice and the blood of Christ. Not one.

It is outside of the purpose of this study to detail all of the types in scripture and others have done it exceptionally well and better than I<sup>3</sup>, if you are interested in the detail. I will select a few major types

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<sup>2</sup> A person exercising delegated power on behalf of a sovereign or ruler.

<sup>3</sup> Habershon, Jukes, Soltau, Keech etc.

however, to establish the importance of types and that they speak before of events to come and that they are prophetic. Noah and the Ark are just one of the great types of Christ in Genesis. Noah brings with him a day of judgement, *Luk 17:26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. Luk 17:27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.*

I am not sure how many people in his day were aware of what Noah was doing, or how many who just shrugged it off as the work of a religious fanatic and those who just did not care? Noah's generation, like most people in our generation today have no sense of the times in which they are living. People were not concerned in Noah's day and now, neither in Christ and the coming judgement. It just does not figure in their thoughts or their daily lives and so they carry on as normal. Noah's testimony was a death sentence on the old world as Christ's is to this world. *2Co 2:15 For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: 2Co 2:16 To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?* The Christian brings judgement with his gospel. *Act 17:31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*

Have you ever considered that if God wanted to destroy man, why did He destroy the animals? They could have been allowed to live and mankind killed by a plague? Man is inextricably linked with the rest of Creation. Noah acted out of faith and the ark was a testimony of his "good conscience". *Heb 11:7 By faith Noah, having been warned about things not yet seen, out of reverence constructed an ark for the deliverance of his family, by which he pronounced sentence on the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.* Only a remnant of that old world was worth saving in the eyes of the Creator. A remnant of humanity and a remnant of Creation. They were saved in a coffin shaped box. In a figure, they enter Christ (through a door), pass through death are baptised in the waters and emerge in a new world alive. *1Pe 3:20 ..... when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. 1Pe 3:21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:*

Noah enters the new world after "baptism", it is a dove that brings the news of the waters abating and it is the dove that brings the good news at Christ's baptism of deliverance. *Joh 1:29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.* The life and times of Noah are an object lesson for our day and age. Both Noah and the Ark are types of Christ.

## **Chap 5. Typology and Prophecy – further examples**

We have suggested that not only is Typology biblically supported, it is prophetic of the person and work of Christ. There is so much of Christ in the Older Testament that it is as if Jesus is distilled out of it into the New. To me it is another proof of the genuineness of Scripture, that all this could not be the work of a man but only of the Creator as it spans so many generations.



My next example is in the life of Abraham and although there are many events which display typologies, this is particularly resonant. *Gen 22:1 And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. Gen 22:2 And he said, Take now thy son, **thine only son** Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.* Abraham is learning what it is like to be God and give up His only begotten son. Perhaps this story is to bring to us, in terms that we can empathise with, the nature of God's sacrifice and its cost. We can relate to personal sacrifice and loss.

We have to wait a few thousand years before we get a more detailed commentary. *Heb 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his **only begotten** (μονογενής = monogenēs) Heb 11:18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Heb 11:19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure (παραβολή = parabolē parable).* The writer of the Hebrews uses the same word as John to describe Isaac, *Joh 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his **only begotten** Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* Isaac is a type of Christ, the only begotten of his father. Yet Abraham had another son, Ishmael, so how was Isaac "only begotten"? In the Psalms the LXX uses the word "only begotten" whereas the AV uses "darling", *Psalms 22:20 Deliver my soul from the sword; my **only-begotten** one from the power of the dog.* LXX. *Psa 22:20 Deliver my soul from the sword; my **darling** from the power of the dog.* Only begotten is a term that carries with it, the sense of favourite.

Isaac also represents the "seed" of Abraham. *Gen 15:4 And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. Gen 15:5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, **So shall thy seed be.*** Isaac is of the lineage of Christ (Matthew Chapter 1).

The seed of Abraham however, has two strands, the natural and the spiritual. Remember that second principle that we identified last time. **First the natural then the spiritual.** Paul states that the "Seed" is not simply the natural seed Christ. *Gal 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And **to thy seed, which is Christ.*** The scripture requires linguistic precision at this point and the meaning hangs upon a singular rather than a plural noun. It is the seed of Christ that inherit the promises of Abraham, the spiritual descendents, not the natural descendents. First the natural then the spiritual. Paul concludes, *Gal 3:26 For ye are all the **children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.....Gal 3:29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*** Keep that in mind, because that is the reason that "natural" Israel can never inherit the promises of God and why there can be no future for "natural" Israel. *Rom 9:6 .....For **they are not all Israel, which are of Israel** ..... Rom 9:8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. **First the natural then the spiritual.***

Isaac also prefigures the resurrection. *Heb 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Heb 11:18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Heb 11:19 Accounting that **God was able to raise him up, even from the dead;** from whence also he received him in a figure.* In other words, the

deliverance of Isaac is a type of the resurrection of Christ. Abraham had faith in Jehovah, that if he carried out the sacrifice of Isaac, God was able to raise Isaac from the dead. This was quite a logical conclusion to be drawn from the nature of God and His promise to raise up seed. Abraham could be quite confident that if he sacrificed Isaac, God would have to raise him in order to fulfil His promise. Incidentally, human sacrifices for sin were not part of OT worship. I suggest that the reason for this is not just that men were sinners and worthless as a sacrifice, but that it was a privilege reserved for Jesus. I suppose that Abraham's understanding of sin might also have drawn this conclusion.

The sacrifice of Isaac was to be on Mount Moriah. *Gen 22:2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.* This is the same place that the temple would be built generations later and where David would raise his Tabernacle. *2Ch 3:1 Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the LORD appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite.* The foundation of the Temple, the foundation of worship was in a manner of speaking, being laid upon the sacrifice of Christ albeit in a type. *1Co 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

Now consider this. If Isaac had died, then the seed would have died. If Christ had died and not been raised from the dead, the seed would have perished with Him. Those in Christ would be dead in Christ. That is why the resurrection is absolutely necessary for our justification. Perhaps that is why the devil would have Jesus jump off of the Temple? If he could destroy Jesus he could destroy the "seed".

As Abraham goes to the place of offering, he lays wood on Isaac. *Gen 22:6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.* The word for wood here (in the LXX) is the same word in Acts for the "tree" that Christ was hanged upon. *Act 5:30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree (ξύλον = xulon).* Is it more than likely that Isaac was to be offered where Christ was later to be crucified at Golgotha? In that act of offering Abraham also declares the teaching of justification by faith, *Jas 2:21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Jas 2:22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?* Abraham the offerer (priest) and Isaac the sacrifice are both types of Christ. I wonder what sense of the presence of Christ, Abraham had when he went up mount Moriah?

One more example before I leave the subject of Typology, is the Tabernacle of Moses. The scripture in Hebrews (Ch 8:5), suggests that when Moses made the Tabernacle, the portable Temple, the tent where God met the people, he was given the plans by God. He was shown the plans on mount Horeb when he received the Law words from Jehovah. It was given to Moses as a "shadow" of something in heaven. *Heb 8:5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the **TYPE** shewed to thee in the mount.*

We should heed this. **"We build what we are told to build"**. This is a simple but profound statement that should cover all activities in our lives as disciples. If we are told to do it, we must do it or face consequences. If we are not told to do it, it is not required of us. We might even want to build but

unless we have permission we sin. To David, *1Ch 28:3 But God said unto me, **Thou shalt not build an house for my name**, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood.* For those who think that a future **earthly** Temple will be built, ask yourselves, where is there a command for man to do this? There is none because Christ has built it. *Zec 6:12 And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and **he shall build the temple of the LORD** ..... Joh 2:19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up ..... Joh 2:21 But he spake of **the temple of his body**.*

It is quite reasonable to ask the question, "What is the need for this Tabernacle or tent of meeting after the Exodus, when for centuries worship has carried on without it?" Its appearance coincides with the creation of Israel as a nation and it serves a number of purposes:

1. **Dwelling place.** *Exodus 25:8. "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them." Exo 29:45 And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. Rev 21:3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. It prefigures heavenly glory.*
2. **Communion.** *Exo 25:22 And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.*
3. **Atonement for Sin.** *Lev 16:13 And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not: Lev 16:14 And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and **sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.** Lev 16:15 Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat: Lev 16:16 And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness.*

The Tabernacle of Moses is a type of Christ. *Exo 25:8 `And they have made for Me a sanctuary, and I have tabernacled in their midst; YLT. Joh 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and did **tabernacle among us**, and we beheld his glory, glory as of an only begotten of a father, full of grace and truth. YLT. The Tabernacle was not just functionality, it was personality. It is not mere intelligent design, it is crafted wisdom, for at its heart is a person. When God dwelt in the midst of Israel, He was revealing Himself and His attributes to men. To do that it required a specially gifted workforce. Exo 31:2 Behold, I have called by name Bezaleel ("In the shadow of God"), the son of Uri, the son of Hur, to the tribe of Judah. Exo 31:3 And **I have filled him with the spirit of God** in wisdom, and in intelligence, and in knowledge, and in all workmanship, Exo 31:4 to devise designs, to work in gold and in silver and in bronze, Exo 31:5 and in cutting of stones for finishings, and in carving of wood, to work in all workmanship. Exo 31:6 And behold! I have given with him Aholiab the son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan; and in the heart of **every wise-hearted one I have given wisdom**;*

The question arises, “How can we say that the tabernacle was a type or image of Christ and the Bible forbids making graven images?” *Exo 20:4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.* I will suggest that the furniture, the artefacts in the Tabernacle were not objects of worship. The furniture of the Tabernacle was not worshipped because it was functional. It was in a manner of speaking like the brass serpent that Moses made when the serpents bit the Israelites. It was not an object of worship to start with but it did become one. At that stage it was destroyed in the days of Hezekiah. *2Ki 18:4 He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days **the children of Israel did burn incense to it:** and he called it Nehushtan.*



The Tabernacle and also the furniture within the Tabernacle will be seen to reveal multiple facets of the Saviour of the World. The Tabernacle becomes a theology of Christ’s work, not simply as sacrifice but also the mediator of the sacrifice and the advocate with the Father. Bear in mind that the artefacts that furnish the Tabernacle of which we speak, were never seen clearly by the majority of the Israelites. **They were, in their transportation, covered.** The artefacts lived their lives, so to speak, covered in cloths and skins, as far as the people were concerned. For most Israelites, their form would have been the subject of speculation and they would have made the images of the Candlestick, the incense altar, the mercy seat and so on, the table of the showbread, in their minds. Like a person covered in heavy clothing, the mercy seat would have veiled its secrets, just as Christ remained hidden until His appointed time. Christ was veiled in the Older Testament.

The Ark of the Covenant does not appear in Scripture after the days of Josiah. It is pure speculation as to what happened to it but what is clear, is that without it, the Jew could not celebrate the day of Atonement. It doesn’t matter that the Jews have a calendar day marked “day of Atonement”, it cannot be observed Biblically. *Lev 16:33 And he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation. Lev 16:34 And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to **make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year.** And he did as the LORD commanded Moses.* Since then there has never been a biblical day of atonement except for the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus. When the Roman General Pompey conquered Jerusalem around 63 B.C., he demanded the privilege of entering the Holy of Holies. When he did, he came out saying that he could not understand what all the interest was in the sanctuary, when it was only an empty room. The Ark never reappeared after the captivity nor in the Temple Herod built. There was just an empty place behind the veil. No mercy seat on which to sprinkle blood. When Jesus walked into the Temple, He was the Ark. When the veil was torn to show that we have entry into the Holy of Holies, it was to show that we enter WITH Christ.

As to the purpose of the Tabernacle artefacts, that too would have been a subject of discussion between the Jews. For the legalistic minds, the function of the objects would have satisfied their

curiosity. Burning incense would have been just an act of worship in itself. No doubt for others it would have been revealed by the Spirit of God to have a meaning beyond the act of incense burning and been related to the offering of prayers to Jehovah. Yet in all of this activity, the ordinary Israelite was a bystander. Worship was regulated by Priests and over them the High Priest who acted for the Nation. The time when the Nation would become Priests in their own right had not yet come. *Exo 19:5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: Exo 19:6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. Which was fulfilled through Christ. 1Pe 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*

The Church of Christ, the Israel of God are now a nation of priests. *Rev 5:9 And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy are You to receive the scroll, and to open its seals, because You were slain, and by Your blood purchased us to God out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, Rev 5:10 and made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign over the earth.* We await the day when we shall enter in to the fullness of this ministry, displayed in types, millennia ago.

I leave it to you to explore those sacred artefacts of the Tabernacle. You can read about them in Exodus chapter 25 (and onwards). Pray for the wisdom of Bezaleel as you meditate on, the dimensions, the materials (shittim wood, pure gold, bronze, precious stones), the design (crowns, wreaths and rings), the symbolism, and above all the purpose. You will find the “Type” of Christ impressed on every part.

## Chap 6. Prophecy, Time and Numbers - What not to know?

Time and numbers in the scripture can appear mysterious and the interpretation of them lies at the heart of many disagreements on future events. The different views on the so called future “Millennium” are down to when this event occurs in relation to the time of Jesus ministry on earth. Also, numbers such as the 144,000 are taken by some to be literal rather than symbolic. How are we to view time and numbers? Literal, spiritual, symbolic or a mixture of all?

When starting to develop a view on future events, you are stepping into a minefield of concepts. It may not have occurred to you but we should also ask whether it is God’s intention that we should fully understand the future times and events. It is a grand presumption that we should but if it was that important, surely it could have been written far more simply and straightforwardly, like for example the teachings on justification by faith and the Gospel of Salvation? The very difficulties inherent in interpreting prophecy should urge us to tread very carefully indeed. How did first century disciples, lacking a Bible, concordances and Bible helps grasp the ideas of John’s Apocalypse? Over the past few weeks, listening to Revelation, you have no doubt formed some ideas yourself and it is not straight forward.

I have said already that it is not my intention to give you a detailed interpretation of end time prophecy, so don’t be disappointed. What I do want to achieve, is to develop an approach and some principles to keep in mind, when dealing with a difficult subject. I must also say that it is a sad state

of affairs in the church of Christ, if we are so dull and stupid, that God can only speak to us on this subject through seminary professors' interpretations of prophecy. I didn't read that we needed that, so I am content to rest on the fact that God can speak to believers without the need for institutional experts. God can speak to us through Jesus. *Jer 31:33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. Jer 31:34 And they **shall teach no more every man his neighbour**, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, **from the least of them unto the greatest of them**, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. .... 1Jn 2:27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of **all things**, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.* If you ask then what the role of teachers in the church, read Ephesians 4:12. It is, *Eph 4:12 For the **repairing** of the Saintes, for the woorke of the ministerie, and for the **edification** of the bodie of Christ.* Geneva. That word "repairing" is used of the disciples mending their nets. Teachers mend and edify. So as we started with Christ alone, let us go in with Christ.

Imagine if we were back in the Older Testament times as citizens of Israel, how would we view future prophecy? If we were living Before Christ, with no knowledge of future history, what would our expectation be? If we lived in the days of Isaiah for example, would we be able to string the gems of prophecy together in the right order? Would we be able to predict the sequence of events? We might identify events but would we get the sequence? I think that it would be highly unlikely. Did Isaiah really understand his own prophecy? I do not think that he fully comprehended it. *1Pe 1:12 It was revealed to them that they **were serving not themselves** but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, **things into which angels long to look**.* ESV. Because a man is a prophet does not mean that he automatically understands what he says or writes, because he is just a messenger. The postman is not privy to the contents of my mail, why should he be?

Let me ask you a question. If you knew for certain sure, where and when Jesus was returning, would you be there for that event? I have little doubt that you would. In what became known as the "Great disappointment", tens of thousands of followers of the Baptist William Miller, gathered on the hilltops on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1844, to greet the second coming of Christ and the day of judgement. Many were so convinced that they had disposed of all their worldly goods. As the sun arose, they went away disappointed.

Prophecy is not straight forward. There were no great queues waiting in Bethlehem of Judah when Jesus was born, because everyone had worked out "where" and "when" the great event would occur. The only people on track were the wise men from another country and they didn't have a clue where the Messiah would be born. They had to ask Herod to identify the place. *Mat 2:8 And he (Herod) sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.* I imagine that even Mary and Joseph did not work it all out until after the event. Even the shepherds were taken by surprise and fear.

When it comes to future dates and events, prophecy does not seem to deliver. People just got it wrong. There was considerable disappointment at the outcome of Jesus ministry. One week before

the crucifixion, they were shouting Hosanna, *Joh 12:13 Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the **King of Israel** that cometh in the name of the Lord.* One week later, He was murdered by the Romans and it seems that was the end of their expectations. The disciples on the Emmaus road bemoaned, *Luk 24:21 But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel:* They were lifted from their gloom when Jesus explained the scriptures referring them to Himself. Everything fell into place. **It was all about Jesus.**

Of course, in retrospect we can see how it all fits together. We have the wisdom of hindsight but very few have the wisdom of foresight. I have never heard any of these prophetic pundits who so confidently predict the future say, "Thus saith the Lord, the Millenium means....." They do not have the Lord's word on the fulfilment only the Lord's word on the events. Future prophecy is generally the realm of "Guessers". Harold Camping predicted 1994 for the coming of Christ. Making the best of a bad job, he went on to say,

"In the nineteen years since "1994?" was written (*sic predicted*.Ed), the biblical evidence for 2011 has greatly solidified. Today there is no longer any question, May 21, 2011 is the day in which Jesus Christ will return".

Another "Guesser" and a false teacher. You see what they do? When they get it wrong, they haven't the moral fibre to say they were wrong, they were just firming up the evidence. They go from clueless to hopeless.

Just because we understand past fulfilments does not mean that we should automatically understand future fulfilments. Even the angels are not privy to it, it is such a guarded secret, *Mar 13:32 But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.* So then, as we read NT prophecy, let us read it very carefully and with the same purpose that we read OT prophecy. Our retrospective of OT prophecy has focussed on one object, Jesus Christ. Let us view the future in the same light as we anticipate the return of Christ and let us also look at the events in terms of Christ's victory over sin and the world.

That still leaves us with the questions of "times" associated with prophecy. If it is not for us to know the times and seasons why do we find time mentioned in scripture? *Act 1:7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. Mar 13:31 Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. Mar 13:32 But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.* If it is not for us to know, **why give dates**, even if the dates might be symbolic rather than literal? What value does time have in the realm of the spirit? *Rev 10:5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, Rev 10:6 And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, **that there should be time no longer.***

For the Creator, there is no tomorrow. There is no past or present. Summed up in the great name of the Lord, Jehovah, the great "I am", is all "being", all seeing, the beginning and the end, the Alpha and Omega. Time is a phenomenon of our physical Universe. Time is a construct of the Creator. He exists both out of Time and in Time. When scripture makes a statement such as, *2Pe 3:8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that **one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a***

*thousand years as one day. Pe 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* It does not necessary mean that the Lord lives on a different time scale, such that one Lord's day equals 1000 man years. It can mean that time has no relevance to the Creator. Days, years, centuries and millennia to us, are all the same to the Lord because He is beyond Time. The arguments that God can see our futures and saves us because He sees us believe, what people call His foreknowledge, are meaningless where there is no Time. What can the word "Future" mean where there is no Time? There can be no future, present or past since these only exist in time.

Someone tried to resolve the paradox of human responsibility and Divine Sovereignty, by saying that they were like parallel lines that meet at infinity (Spurgeon). Both appear true from scripture but are hard to reconcile in Time. Yet we forget that the Creator is not constrained by Time as we are, in our "Time bubble". Things may look and work totally differently from God's perspective. The concepts of past, present, future, predestination, foreknowledge and foresight cannot have the same meaning in time as they do outside of time. That should make us exercise great caution when we try to predict what God is doing, especially when it comes to "future" prophecy. C.S. Lewis wrote in *Mere Christianity*, p. 147, "If you picture Time as a straight line along which we have to travel, then you must picture God as the whole page on which the line is drawn". Just how we would perceive this present world from the Divine viewpoint is hard to imagine.

The "Last days" are marked by an attitude to "Time", which I shall call Uniformitarian Time. Uniformitarianism is the assumption that the same natural laws and processes that operate in the universe now, have always operated in the universe in the past and apply everywhere in the universe. It has included the gradualistic concept that "the present is the key to the past" and that everything is functioning at the same rates as in the past. But this is an illusion according to Peter. *2Pe 3:3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 2Pe 3:4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.* This is a deliberate denial by mankind of the Creation and the Flood. *2Pe 3:5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: 2Pe 3:6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: 2Pe 3:7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*

I have said it before and I will say it again, the Gospel begins with the Creation. If you cannot accept the Creator and His Creation, you will never know the Christ of the Bible and the Saviour of the world. You will not believe in Adam or His sin and you will not know Christ and His life. If you cannot acknowledge that sin against the Creator, you will forever be lost in darkness.

When we come across Time in the Bible, we must ask a question as to what sort of Time we are looking at? How can we tell if we are dealing with "Literal" time or "Symbolic" time? By that, I mean, when scripture talks about a "day", does it mean a literal 24 hour day, equivalent to one earth rotation on its axis, or does it mean an "epoch" or a "scaled" time period? By epoch I mean a period that covers an event, for example one of the Creation days, which according to some are vast periods of ordinary time. By scaled time, I mean a period of time that needs a scaling factor to make



it believable, like the vast ages of the pre-diluvian patriarchs. Let me give some examples and let us discuss what they could mean.

1. *Exo 20:11 For **in six days** the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.*
2. *Gen 5:15 And Mahalaleel lived **sixty and five years**, and begat Jared: Gen 5:16 And Mahalaleel lived after he begat Jared **eight hundred and thirty years**, and begat sons and daughters:*
3. *Gen 15:13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them **four hundred years**;*
4. *Rev 20:2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a **thousand years**.*
5. *Rev 12:5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. Rev 12:6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a **thousand two hundred and threescore days**.*

In **example 1**, the testimony of Genesis is quite clear that the Universe came into being in 6 days and the Creator rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day. All sorts of theories have been put forward to try and reconcile the apparent geological and astronomical records with the idea of “days”. People invent “gaps”, they separate Genesis chapter one from Chapter two as two different accounts of Creation, they invent a “day” is an “age” theory. In short, anything to avoid the acceptance of a 24 hour day. All I can say is that if the day was an age, then the “evening and the morning” that formed the boundaries of the creation days must have been also epochs of darkness and light.

A problem occurs in reconciling the day of rest, the Sabbath, with the seventh day of Creation. Now you could have had a “Sabbath” without explaining where it comes from. You could just have “*the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it*” and leave it at that. However, by introducing the statement, “*For **in six days** the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and **rested the seventh day**:*” we are immediately challenged. If the “day” was an epoch, the “Sabbath” is an epoch, not 24 hours and that just does not make sense. The meaning of “day” would have changed within the sentence, without explanation or reason.

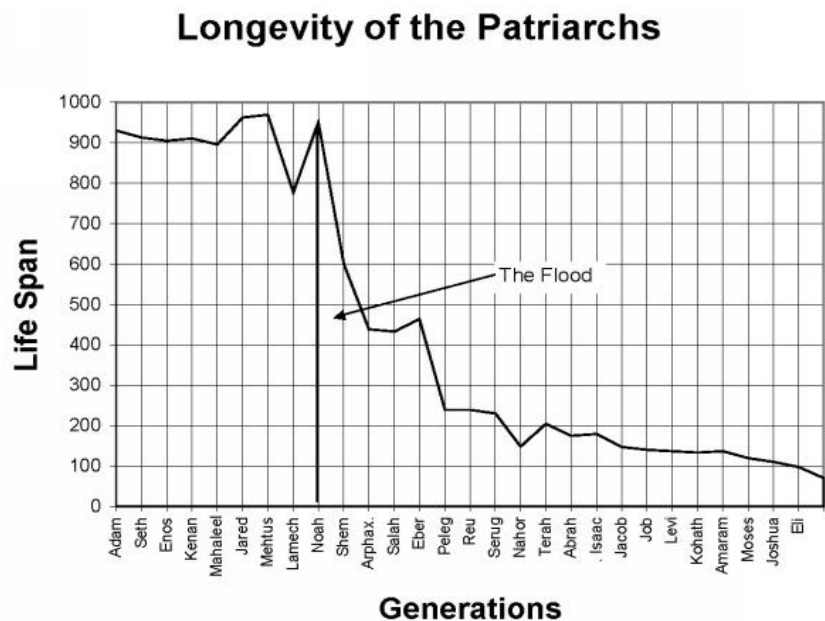
It is a similar logical inference to this, *1Co 15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive*. If Adam is not a man the analogy fails. What is Adam if he is not a man who brings death upon humanity, just as Christ is a man who brings life? Paul has no difficulty in accepting the literality of Adam, *1Co 15:45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit*. Luke records that the lineage of Christ can be traced back to this physical Adam. I would therefore say that the answer to our **example 1** is that it is reasonable, using the analogy of scripture that the “day” is a literal day.

In **example 2**, what are we to make of the “years” of Mahalaleel? Are they equivalent to 365 earth day rotations? Some have mocked the idea that man can live to these vast ages, nearly a whole millennium, a dozen lifetimes by today’s reckoning. It would be like a man alive today watching the signing of the Magna Carta. This mockery is generally based upon the life expectancy we experience

today and the aging rate of our bodies. This argument is again based upon a form of uniformitarianism, the assumption that the same natural laws and processes that operate in the universe now have always operated in the universe in the past and apply everywhere in the universe. This is not scientifically proven, it is an assumption, another hypothesis.

Some have tried to rationalise these pre-flood patriarchs great ages by arbitrarily assigning a scaled value to the ages. They would say, it is more likely that Mahalaleel was 83 years rather than 830 years. That of course would mean that he was 6½ years (65 years / 10) when he begat Jared. That also presents difficulties.

If you plot the lifespans of the patriarchs you will observe something interesting. It is, that after the Flood, longevity declines rapidly. Now I am not going to digress to explain what might have caused this but if you are interested, read Dr John Sanford's book Genetic Entropy and the Mystery of the Genome. The point is, that uniformitarianism is not shown in these ages. Men just lived much shorter lives after the flood.



Jacob acknowledged this reduction in lifespan, *Gen 47:9 And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.*

I would therefore say that the answer to our **example 2** is that it is reasonable, using the analogy of scripture that the “year” is a literal year. DV we shall continue next time.

## Chap 7. Prophecy, Time and Numbers - Literal or spiritual?

If it was the purpose of prophecy to inform us in advance of precise times and seasons, then it has failed miserably. There were not crowds of expectant people awaiting the Messiah when He came. When Jesus first arrived at the Temple, He was met by Simeon. Simeon was there because *Luk 2:26 .... it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Luk 2:27 And he came by the Spirit into the temple:* It does not say that he was following prophecy, he was given a personal revelation by the Spirit. Anna spent her days at the Temple, *Luk 2:37 and she was a widow of eighty four years, who did not depart from the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers. Luk 2:38 And coming on at the very hour, she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke concerning Him to all those in Jerusalem eagerly expecting*

*redemption*. It is not clear whether she picked up on Simeon's statements or whether she was led separately.

The wise men had been following a star, not the prophecy of Micah because they had not a clue where the Saviour was to be born. *Mat 2:2 Saying, **Where is he that is born King of the Jews?** for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.* Herod's scribes had to help them out. Just what information prompted their quest remains a mystery. None of the Jews felt it necessary to wait at Bethlehem to set up a welcoming committee and there were no crowds in Jerusalem. What was the national expectation? What did people get out of the Prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos and Daniel? Were they as lacking in knowledge as we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century about the future? I think that they were and that is a reflection on what we expect from prophecy.

Continuing our study we look **at Example 3** which asks if the years forecast until the deliverance from Egypt were literal? *Gen 15:13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them **four hundred years**;* The answer to this is straight forward. *Exo 12:40 Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. Exo 12:41 And it came to pass at the end of the **four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.*** If you examine the scriptures, you can see that the "400" years is a rounded figure and the "430" years can be calculated from the text. It is not a scribal error. I would therefore say that the answer to our **example 3** is that it is reasonable, using the analogy of scripture that the "year" is a literal year. We can say this because we know its fulfilment. Would we have come to that conclusion if we lived before the fulfilment? Well yes, if there was a general rule that all time mentioned in prophecy is literal time, then we would. Is there such a rule?

So far all our dates have been literal. **Example 4** the "millennium" is less straight forward. We have as yet, seen no reason to spiritualise numbers. A number is exactly what it is. A year is a year and a day is a day but why on occasion does God use symbolic language? *Gen 41:1 And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river. Gen 41:2 And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine and fatfleshed; and they fed in a meadow. Pharaoh dreamed of 'cows' and 'corn' and had no clue of the meaning. The cows and ears of corn became years in prophetic language, Gen 41:26 The seven good **kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one.*** God used similitude's to enable His servant Joseph to become the interpreter of dreams and to become a deliverer of His people Israel.

God has purpose in symbols because it will disguise the meaning from the unbeliever. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that he could not understand, *Dan 2:19 Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.* Daniel did not just interpret the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, he had to recall the dream itself for the king.

So in "dream speak", cattle and corn can become years just as Christ can become the lamb of God and the bread of heaven. So we find ourselves in a realm of imagery where the symbols have meaning. Just what the meaning is, we must strive to find out. When dealing with numbers, the question arises "How can we tell if we are dealing with a literal or symbolic number?" That is not so easy to answer as we might think. For example, why should we not interpret the millennia as a literal thousand years? *Rev 20:1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the*

*bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. Rev 20:2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.* The word “millennium” or “thousand years” is only used in Revelation chapter 20. That makes it very difficult to interpret as there are no other contextual usages in scripture to judge what it means. As a result, determining what it means and when it occurs in history has resulted in many different interpretations which I do not intend to go into and add to your confusion at this stage. It will suffice to say, that if there are so many differing views, they cannot all be correct and there is no clear consensus about the meaning of “Millenium”. I might even go further and say why should any of these views be correct?

When I see this spread of ideas about the millennium, the variability of interpretation, it leads me to one conclusion and that is, there is little concrete evidence to build a case as to when and what it is. It is far removed from the crystal clear teachings about justification by faith alone, the resurrection of the dead or credo-baptism (believer’s baptism). The millennium just retains its mystery. None the less, let us suppose we start with the idea that it is a literal 1000 years. When did the first year commence? If it commenced at the Crucifixion, *Joh 12:31 Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out*, then its end has passed. It would have finished around the time of the Norman conquest or a bit before. There was not much on the historical horizon about that time to show its completion and many for this reason, post it in a future period of history, as not yet having begun.

If it has not started, what new event will mark its commencement? When is satan bound to mark the commencement? Then when it is over, it appears a short time until the end of all things, *Rev 20:7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, Rev 20:8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. Rev 20:9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.*

The events that the millennium embraces are these: 1. Satan is bound and cast into the Abyss (where is this?) 2. The martyrs and faithful reign with Christ 3. The nations are not deceived 4. Those not among the faithful remain dead. It is possible to interpret these events in the light of the finished work of Christ, however, literalists look at it as being a future event. This is a choice you will make when interpreting it. On balance I am inclined to give the millennium a symbolic value but as we have seen, there is no reason to spiritualise time. If you asked me how confident I was in my opinion, I would say “not very” and that is a caution I give to all the overconfident expositors of prophecy.

Just as an aside, I have seen some of the worst behaviour come from “Christians” who disagree about prophetic interpretation. I remember years ago, I used to have an occasional prayer time with a dear old brother. He was very gracious and gentle, but one day the subject of the “Church” came up and he did not believe the church existed before Christ. He had a dispensational view of prophecy. The verse in question was, *Act 7:38 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:* The LXX uses the word *ekklesia* to describe the congregation of Israel in the OT. The dear brother exploded. For some reason and this was just one of many occasions, I have seen prophetic interpretation polarise individuals and bring the most unchristian responses you could imagine. My advice is, that if you cannot hold a prophetic view from your own study of

scripture, do not blindly hold to what other men teach and be very cautious. You have no obligation to defend the interpretations of men that you cannot articulate for yourself. Most of all do not let such a grey area be an occasion of disunity. The devil loves that to happen.

**Example 5** is even more enigmatic. *Rev 12:5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. Rev 12:6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a **thousand two hundred and threescore days**.* We have shown that a day can mean a literal day, so why would we say any different here? There are the “day for a year” brigade. These people think that we should apply a scaling factor, based on scriptures such as *Num 14:34 After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, **each day for a year**, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.* And, *Eze 4:5 For I have laid upon thee **the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days**, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. Eze 4:6 And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee **each day for a year**.*

In the examples above, where a day is exchanged for a year it is specifically stated that it has that meaning. However, I find no general principle here to apply in order to change periods of days into periods of years, just to try and make more sense of them. This is not a rule, such that when you see “day” you must turn it into a “year”.

You will have also noted if you have read Revelation chapters 11, 12 and 13 that there are three periods of time mentioned which all amount to the same thing (read these chapters). (*Rev 11:3, Rev 12:6 **1260 days**, Rev 13:5 **42 months**, Rev 12:14 **Time, Times and half a Time** cf Rev 12:6*). Are we to assume that these periods are all talking about the same space of time (that they are concurrent) or do they occur separately from each other? If they are concurrent, why not use the same notation,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years? Further, if they are literal periods, it is a very short time space to accomplish such significant events. *Rev 12:5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. Rev 12:6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.* If this is speaking of Christ, His ascension and the persecuted church, then a longer time period is needed to explain it. The alternative is that we apply some scaling factor and make the 1260 days into 1260 years but that too leaves us with more questions than it answers. Again we puzzle as to why, if this is so important to know, it is not said more plainly?

The prophecy of John’s Revelation is made difficult because of the imagery used. In the book of Revelation, there is a lot of symbolic imagery, and I am suggesting that it is also possible that the time here may be symbolic but that can only be true if we know for certain what the images mean. Our interpretation requires us to understand who the “woman” is, the “wilderness”, the “child”, the “key”, the “bottomless pit” (Abyss), the “chain”, the “rule” (literally shepherding) before we can guess what the time period is? The dates will make no sense until we can prove what these are and put them in a time frame.

I will just look at one number from Revelation that you will have heard of and it is the 144,000 and if you haven’t, you will, if you talk to JW’s. To this cult, the number represents a special group of “believers”. According to JW’s it is God’s Holy Spirit who convinces the individual that they indeed

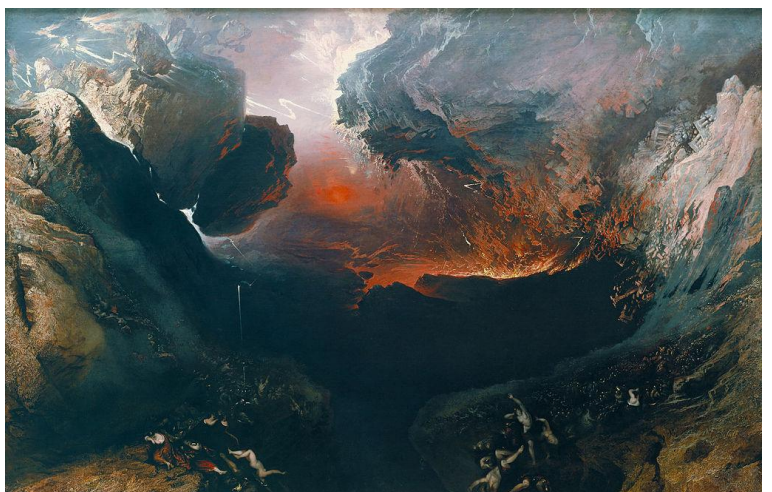
belong to the anointed class and have a heavenly call. Only with them and them alone Jesus has entered into a second covenant. God's Kingdom will however also rule over the earth, which will forever be inhabited by a 'great crowd' of righteous ones/other sheep (that is JW's and non-JW's) which no man is able to number. Only the ones who belong to the anointed 144,000 can partake of the Lord's Table (the "emblems") thus they show they belong to the second covenant and are one with Christ. I don't want to dwell on this falsehood but suffice to say, there are NEVER three classes of person in scripture, that is, the unbeliever, the earthbound believer and the heavenly called believer. NEVER. There are only two classes, believer (those in Christ) and the unbeliever (those by nature the children of wrath).

Now who are the 144,000? If we take it as a literal number, *Rev 7:4 And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.* They are not gentiles. *Rev 14:1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.....Rev 14:4 These are they which were **not defiled with women; for they are virgins.** These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.* They are only of male gender and are virgins. So you see, this is a very select group if taken literally. Who do you think that they are? I will leave you with that thought and remind you that it is certainly not those that the JW's consider it to be.

It has not been my purpose to interpret the dates and numbers in prophecy in this study but merely to show the difficulties associated with interpretation. I would not however, discourage you from reading the prophecies because there is much that can profit you. How then can we use the dates and numbers? I have some suggestions for you. Firstly, imagine that you have a set of filing cabinets (you can create them on your PC or in your head). Mentally place the numbers and dates as labels on the drawers of the cabinets. There will be a drawer with "1260 days" marked on it. Another drawer will have "144,000" on it and another "1000 years" on it. You get the point? Now put the information associated with those numbers and dates in the appropriate drawers.

In the "millennium" drawer place the events associated with it. Make a note of the key words for future recall. The angel, the key, the bottomless pit (Abyss), the great dragon, the seal upon him, the loosing for a little season, the thrones, the judgment, the souls, the beast, the mark, the reign, the first resurrection, the second death, the reign of Christ, the loosing of satan, the deceit of the nations, Gog and Magog, the battle, the camp of the saints, the beloved city, the lake of fire and brimstone, the great white throne, the books, the book of life, the second death, the lake of fire. If you find anything in scripture that relates to this virtual drawer, file it in there and see if you get a clearer picture of events as the drawer fills.

Secondly, you may look at each of these time periods as paintings. The book of Revelation is a great gallery of Christ's Triumph. Revelation is full of imagery and has inspired many artists (John Martin Day of



Judgement). If your imagination is not too good, you can find many pictures on the web. Enjoy the imagery of Revelation.

If we can at this stage make little sense of the dating, what can we say of the events? We can say a lot. We can say that Satan is easily contained by the power of God and that leads me to the conclusion that the final victory by Christ is a foregone conclusion. Is Christ the angel who has the key and the chain? Is the devil less than a dog on the Divine leash of God's iron will? Most certainly. We can say that the saints reign with Christ, if not completely now, most definitely we shall as victors. We can say that Christ will avenge the martyrs of the faith and there will be a final judgement for sin. We can say that evil people will not escape the reach of Divine justice. We can see that the present Heaven and Earth flee before the omnipotent Creator. You see, there is much of comfort to be had here, even if we cannot predict the precise time. We are travelling to a new and glorious future, of which, the travel brochure, the book of Revelation, tells us of many things. We are just not too sure when we shall get the tickets. To me personally, the certainty of the events is far more important to me than the time they will occur.

When we arrive at the little Apocalypse, as Matthew 24 is known, we shall have another view of the future from the Saviour Himself. It is in some ways a simpler view and one which will add insight into Revelation. That said, there is a lot of scripture that must also be considered when interpreting Revelation and indeed other prophecies.

Before we close this section on "Prophecy, Time and Numbers", I have one more ministry that will attempt to provide some conclusions and warnings on the subject.

## Chap 8. Prophecy, Time and Numbers - Blind guides

So what are we to make of dates and numbers? I will suggest that what is perhaps more important than the dates and numbers are the circumstances and events associated with the dates and numbers. The event that should concern us most is the second coming of Christ. I see everything else as coming a very poor second behind the return of the Lord. I can change nothing of the future but this I can do, I can be ready, *Luk 12:37 Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. Luk 12:38 And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. Luk 12:39 And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Luk 12:40 **Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.***

Beware of being forced into accepting a particular prophetic view. We are not called to defend other people's beliefs. Some smart, overconfident minister may persuade you that he has all the answers, that he is the one to whom God has revealed the truth. Of course, that doesn't make you feel too good does it? Why are you not smart enough to work it out? This is certainly another way of creating feelings of inferiority in the Church. Shrug it off, it is just human arrogance on the part of these people. Some Church groups even make acceptance of a particular prophetic view conditional on being part of the group. It becomes a condition for Church membership. You can only be in their



“gang” if you submit to the gang rules. This is not working towards the unity of the faith, it is gendering division and exclusiveness. This is a dangerous development of prophetic belief.

In the first place, Church membership is non-scriptural. I am already a member of Christ’s body, *Rom 12:5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.* You can join a sect or a denomination of man if you wish but I don’t have to. I am a member of Christ’s body and a member with everyone in that body. There is nothing that I could do, that would make me more a member than I am. Don’t forget that, when men try to snare you into their net. *Col 2:18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.* The moment you sign a membership card you are denying that Christ has already made us members. You have at the stroke of a pen put Christ into second place. The moment you cross the line to join with the rules of men you are putting yourself under the yoke of men. We might expect this unthinking submission from cults but sadly it is true of professing Churches. Here are some examples:

Quote: “These are nonnegotiable tenets of faith that **all Assemblies of God churches adhere to.....WE BELIEVE...in The Millennial Reign of Christ when Jesus returns with His saints at His second coming and begins His benevolent rule over earth for 1,000 years. This millennial reign will bring the salvation of national Israel and the establishment of universal peace.**”

You can read that passage on the millennium in Revelation 20 until the words on the page are worn out but you will never see “the salvation of national Israel”. Just what “national Israel” is we shall show DV in a later ministry.

This statement of faith ([Faith Bible Church](#)) says,

“...the doctrinal foundation of our church family. Membership in our church **requires acceptance** of this statement. In addition, each year our Pastors and Elders **must review and sign** both the statement of faith and the expanded statement/teaching position that follows. (Example).....HISTORY is controlled by the sovereign rule of God and will culminate in the **establishment of His kingdom upon the earth**, a kingdom ruled by His Son and those who have placed their faith in Him. (The Second Coming of Christ. God will **fulfil His promises to Israel** and establish a literal thousand-year kingdom of Christ on earth. (1 Thess. 5:1-6; Rev. 20:1-3).”

Note: check the texts they quote because they say nothing of the sort. When Jesus spoke to Pontius Pilate, He made it clear, *Joh 18:36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is **not of this world**: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but **now is my kingdom not from hence**.* It is not the kingdom of earth, it is the kingdom of Heaven.

[The Master's Seminary](#) opened its doors in Fall (Autumn) 1986 under the leadership of Dr. John MacArthur. They have a statement of faith which they hope “will provide an anchor to protect the institution against theological drift”. For this reason, members of the board of directors,



administration, and faculty members are annually required to sign a statement affirming agreement with this Statement of Faith<sup>4</sup>. In it, it states that:

“We teach that, after **the tribulation period**, Christ will come to earth to **occupy the throne of David** and establish His messianic kingdom for a thousand years **on the earth**. During this time the resurrected **saints will reign with Him over Israel** and all the nations of the earth. This reign will be preceded by the overthrow of the Antichrist and the False Prophet, and by the removal of Satan from the world. We teach that the kingdom itself will be the fulfilment of God's **promise to Israel to restore them to the land which they forfeited through their disobedience**”.

This horrendous and blasphemous view attempts to re-establish what Christ has torn down. It puts in pride of place a nation that for the most part rejected the Messiah and of whom the martyr Stephen said of them, *Act 7:51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Act 7:52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: I have nothing but contempt for these theological bullies who want people to believe that which Our Lord Jesus Himself, **never taught**.*

Dallas theological Seminary: Full Doctrinal Statement (for Seminary faculty and board) demands:

“our faculty and board annually affirm their agreement with the full doctrinal statement Article XX—The Second Coming of Christ We believe that the period of great tribulation in the earth will be climaxed by the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth as He went, in person on the clouds of heaven, and with power and great glory to introduce the millennial age, to bind Satan and place him in the abyss, to lift the curse which now rests upon the whole creation, **to restore Israel to her own land and to give her the realization of God's covenant promises**, and to **bring the whole world to the knowledge of God**.”

My brethren, the promises were fulfilled. They were fulfilled in Christ, *Rom 15:8 Let me explain. Christ became a servant for the Jewish people to reveal God's truth. As a result, he fulfilled God's promise to the ancestors of the Jewish people*. GW. Please also note this very important point. The promises were given to **Christ not Israel**, they were to the “SEED”. *Gal 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ*. Please read this chapter and now ask yourself this. How, if the promises of God were given to Christ and Christ alone, would those promises be taken back and given to an unbelieving people? God would be going back on His promise to Christ and putting an unbelieving nation in His place. The promises of God are all centred in Christ and to be a partaker of the promises, we must be IN CHRIST.

I do not agree with much of what these people want me to believe but a more detailed analysis of this will have to wait for a later ministry. I make the point that there is a cultish like conformity to beliefs that most people in these churches have and I doubt they can all defend them but they are happy to follow men. You must ask where did God ever give man the authority to ADD conditions to

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<sup>4</sup> <https://legacy.tms.edu/AboutSOFpreamble.aspx>

be part of HIS Church? Is a man's trust in Christ so weak that he must turn to men for his beliefs? I can only conclude that these so called churches are men's churches and not Christ's Church because the rules are different.

There are also many volumes on prophecy out there, encouraging you to buy their wares and follow their ways. My advice is avoid them all like the plague for none are inspired. I am not saying give up on studying but in this particular area, prophecy, it is mostly unprofitable speculation. By all means study the principles of prophetic Interpretation and then interpret it yourself.

Take this example of speculation, where Kent Hovind in his recent book “What on earth is about to happen for heavens sake” invites the reader,

“In this unusual book I will try to give the reader THE BIG PICTURE of the history of the world and explain what is about to happen, based on The Book that has given thousands of predictions and prophecies and **has never been wrong even one time yet!** This amazing book is The Bible - God’s preserved Word for mankind. For centuries people have written and preached on the subject of end times. Opinions vary all over the place! After 43 years of studying God's Word I've decided to add my opinion to the lo-o-o-o-o-ong list. :) I have tried to arrange the topics once we get into the big picture of world history, based on the numbered timelines below, so the reader can skip to any section they wish without having to read through the entire book...” He goes on to say,

“By 2028 could people be turning each other in for not taking the mark (of the beast) to “save the economy” or to get bonus food.....If any of this is true that would mean 2021 would be when the treaty is made and they start building the temple.....I think we have 15 years till the Lord comes”.

Kent's clock is ticking and according to him you have 13 years left now. Yes Kent, the Bible "has never been wrong even one time yet" but it is a huge leap of faith to believe that you have inherited infallibility. At last you are someone so popular with the Lord that the Creator has relented and given you the calendar of the last days. I think not and you will join the pile of other failed prophets. I reiterate, you and I brethren, have no obligation to believe what other men say (even me), *1Th 5:20 Despise not prophesyings. 1Th 5:21 **Prove all things**; hold fast that which is good.*

I am sure that many Christians think that they are preserving the purity of the faith by creating their rules for membership and those who put forth their definitive views of obscure prophecy think that they are defenders of the faith. The reality is that it works against the very thing it tries to preserve. It is the cause of Divisions in the Churches, it creates denominations. The fact that there are so many different interpretations of prophecy should urge us to great caution when we try and make it a “distinctive” of our beliefs. It more often than not becomes a point of dispute, ill will and division.

Prophecy is probably the most divisive subject in the Churches. How can so many people, using the same biblical texts, come to so many different opinions. The same thing goes in, they read the same bible but what comes out of the process, I can only describe as textual diarrhoea. *Mat 15:11 Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.* Here are some closing thoughts on this section of our study.

1. Have you been guided by “The testimony of Jesus!” or were you looking to other things when you studied prophecy? Were you looking to see spectacular world events, Wars, a nation being restored, buildings built signs and wonders or were your eyes firmly fixed upon the coming of Jesus. *Heb 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Heb 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith;* Some will say but surely, these future events are important, they are signs of the times? I answer, their importance lies only in the value that Christ’s person and work gives them and how Christ is glorified through them. Simeon waited a lifetime for the merest glimpse of the Messiah and having that one look was enough reward such that he could “depart in peace”. Let us follow his example.
  
2. How does prophecy lead you? When you hear these differing beliefs in the last days and end times are you being brought closer to Christ or to confusion? Are being led towards Christ or away from Christ? Are the teachings edifying you in Christ? When Peter draws our attention to the last days he does so with a particular purpose, *2Pe 3:10 The day of the Lord will come like a thief. On that day heaven will pass away with a roaring sound. Everything that makes up the universe will burn and be destroyed. The earth and everything that people have done on it will be exposed....*read to end of chapter. The day of the Lord will take us like a thief, it will not be obvious. The coming end should make us consider the way we live our lives. We should also be in a state of anticipation of this great event when the heavens will be dissolved.

We look forward to a new heaven and earth (not a restored Israel on this earth). Since we foreknow these things, that is, we have knowledge of the events, not the times, let us hold on to our faith. Beware lest we are led away by the wicked. Yet more than this, let us grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ. Is that where we are going in our studies or are we just accumulating information, becoming smart in using our Bibles, knowledgeable in doctrines, clever in the theory of religion, all of this without the knowledge of Christ. I mentioned recently that I spoke with some JW’s. They had Bibles and texts but they had no personal knowledge of the Saviour. It was like people who watched a story but were never in the story. **They saw the film but were never in the film.**

3. If you cannot defend your beliefs why do you cling to them? If you cannot articulate your faith what do you have? If you have a view of the end times that you picked up off of someone else, can you prove it is true? If I have been to a place, seen it, smelt the air, felt the ground under my feet, I can describe it. When we have experienced the truth in Christ we should be able to describe it, if not what can we say about it? It is just a hypothesis, a proposition. If we understand the prophecy about the end time we should be able to articulate it and support it from scripture. If we cannot then we should keep our ideas to ourselves. The last thing that we should ever do is defend someone else’s hypotheses. Sadly, it is often those who study the least themselves that hold fast to other men’s teaching.
  
4. What are the dangers in holding a false view? It is my belief that satan wants God’s children to be confused and believe a lie. The man of sin that Paul speaks of does the devils own

work. *2Th 2:9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 2Th 2:10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.* We can so easily be drawn away from Christ. We can be led to believe things that have the sole purpose of undermining the person and work of Christ. Above all, false views lead to false worship. It can also lead to being a false prophet.

I have said enough on the subject of Time and Number. Next time DV, we move into the subject of definitions.

- Covenant
- Jew
- Circumcision
- Israel/Nation
- Temple
- Jerusalem
- Priest

What should these words mean to a believer?

## Chap 9. Definitions - Covenants and Jews

A very important issue for us to face when interpreting prophecy, relates to the Biblical terms that we use. If we examine the New Testament carefully, we will find that Jesus has rewritten the terms and conditions of our relationship with the Creator. It is my belief that we should use the terms conferred upon us and not continue to use the old terms. If you had been promoted in the military, if you had been given a commission, you would not walk about in the uniform of a private. You would live up to the rank that has been conferred upon you. You do not go back to your old rank. I believe that this is exactly what we in the NT must learn to do.

If Christ died to bring these changes into our lives, we are despising His work if we do not hold to them? *Rev 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and **washed us from our sins in his own blood**, Rev 1:6 And hath **made us kings and priests unto God and his Father**; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.* We are sons and daughters of the King of Kings so let us live like we are. Every morning when you get up and look in a mirror, say out loud, I am a Son (or Daughter) of Almighty God! *1Jn 3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, **that we should be called the sons of God**: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*

I believe also that the definitions we shall examine will play a large part in determining the outcome of the prophetic word. They will help us to decide who or what is being spoken of. Some of the terms that we shall examine have dual meanings, referring to natural or spiritual things. The terms that I wish to consider are as follows:

- Covenant

- Jew
- Circumcision
- Israel/Nation
- Temple
- Jerusalem
- Priest

Starting with **the term Covenant**<sup>5</sup>. A covenant is a form of agreement where you undertake to do certain things in return for other things, it is like a contract, an agreement between God and his people, in which God makes promises to his people and, usually, requires certain conduct from them.

*Heb 8:5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount. Heb 8:6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. Heb 8:7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. Heb 8:8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when **I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah**: Heb 8:9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. Heb 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; **I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts**: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:*

You will observe that this New (καίνος = kainos) Covenant, new in the sense that it has not been used before, is with the house of Israel and Judah. We shall consider what this means later, whether it refers to ancient Israel and ancient Judah or whether it refers to the elect in Christ? Either way, this New Covenant has a very clear and practical outcome. God's laws are no longer written on stone tablets as they were with Moses. They are internalised, they are written in our minds and on the fleshly tables of our hearts. The law becomes part of us in Christ.

This New Covenant or Testament is to be celebrated by believers until Jesus returns. It is not celebrated with animal sacrifices, the blood of bulls and goats but through the elements of bread and wine. *1Co 11:25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the **new testament** in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. 1Co 11:26 For as **often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup**, ye do shew the Lord's death **till he come**.* In this ceremony first instituted on a Jewish Passover, we escape the angel of death through the merits of Jesus' death. In this memorial, the elements remind us of Jesus death (and all that His death embraces) and also that He will come a second time, when they shall become obsolete.

How did we enter the New Covenant? It is very similar to the entry into the Old Covenant. *Heb 9:19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all*

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<sup>5</sup> בְּרִית beriyth a compact (because made by passing between pieces of flesh), confederacy, covenant, league. Διαθήκη diathēkē a disposition, a contract (especially a devisory will) covenant, testament.

the people, Heb 9:20 Saying, *This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Heb 9:21 Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. Heb 9:22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without **shedding of blood is no remission**.* We become partakers of the New Covenant when we partake in the sacrifice of Christ and come under the power of His blood. Rom 3:24 *Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Rom 3:25 Whom God hath set forth to be a Mercyseat through **faith in his blood**, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;* We are made right with God when we accept the power of Christ's blood to forgive our sin. We are washed clean, as the blind hymn writer Fanny J Crosby said (and who now sees in glory), "O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood, To every believer the promise of God; The vilest offender who truly believes, That moment from Jesus a pardon receives."

The Old Covenant then, was ended, dead and buried. From the moment Christ cried out "It is finished", the Old Covenant was finished. The old Jews, the lineage of Abraham, could no longer have a relationship with their Creator unless they came under the blood of the New Covenant. It is not that the first Covenant was bad, or that because it was hard God lowered the "moral bar". Rom 7:7 *What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. The law ever was and is holy, Rom 7:12 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.* What has happened then, in terms of our relationship to the law? Rom 7:6 *But now **we are delivered from the law**, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.* We now serve in the Spirit. Rom 8:2 *For the **law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death**.* Not freed to break the law but free from the sin and death occasioned by the law. That law has been subsumed in the New Covenant and we benefit from the obedience of Christ on our behalf. I will DV say more at a later time but it is my opinion that NONE of the scriptural Covenants are destroyed but rather are overtaken and absorbed into the New Covenant through the obedience of Christ. We are the beneficiaries.

The idea that the Jews could continue in some special relationship with God, while being outside of the New Covenant is a lie and a denial of the New Covenant. John the Baptist said that natural descent, relationships to the patriarchs, were not going to help Israel into the Kingdom of God. Luk 3:8 *Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and **begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.*** The stones had more chance of a relationship with God than unrepentant Jews. The New Covenant when it was confirmed was not an alternative to the Old Covenant. It was the ONLY covenant that God now recognised. As Jesus said, "None come to the Father but by ME", "I am the Way", "I am the door". I hope that we do not take that great privilege for granted and that we rejoice in this eternal blessing.

Now I have laboured this for a reason. It is because there are those who through their reading of scripture think that the Jews will again rise to prominence via a restored temple, priesthood and its sacrifices. Yet we have seen that those sacrifices would now be worthless. Heb 9:26 *..... but **now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*** Indeed any other sacrifice would be an open mockery of the work of Christ. The earthly nation of Israel did not believe Jesus the first time that He came. Why should they believe if He came a second time for a rerun? We are warned about despising the blood of Christ. Heb 10:28 *He that despised Moses' law*

*died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Heb 10:29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who **hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?***

**Judaism is dead in the eyes of God.** Now, I am not saying that those who follow Judaism are utterly cut off from the grace of God. They are no different to any other sinful human being, in that they need forgiveness. I am not saying that when the curtain fell on the Old Testament all Jews were immediately lost. That is plainly not true, because the early Church was mostly composed of Jews. Synagogues were a great recruiting ground for Christianity. *Act 13:43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to **continue in the grace of God**.* The transition from a believing Jew to a believing Christian was quite seamless. By accepting Christ as Messiah and Saviour, they “continued in the Grace of God”. It must therefore be true that those who did not accept Christ, did not continue in the grace of God. Yet that did not shut the door to grace. Throughout the centuries, the followers of Judaism have been grafted back into the historic Olive tree but I stress again, this is **only** through the forgiveness of Christ. If this is the only process whereby the restoration of a relationship with the Creator is made, being justified by faith in Christ, how is it even possible that we could consider that the things that were “done away with” should be restored? How could we dare expect the restoration of the Nation of Israel and its rituals as a welcome to the second coming of Christ? *2Co 3:11 For if that which is **done away** was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.*

How is it possible that followers of Jesus can even entertain the possibility of a restored earthly Judaism and its artefacts? How could we return to the things of the Old Covenant in the face of the New? The only reason would be, is that we attached more significance and purpose to a Nation than we do to the person and work of Christ. When it comes down to it, Jesus is made to take the back seat of prophecy and Israel takes the front seat of prophecy.

We have by this thinking, removed Jesus from the focus of prophecy and we have discarded that first principle, “**the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy**”. It is as if we let our hand slip out of Jesus hand and grasp at something else. It is as if those fundamental principles associated with the death and resurrection of Christ, that blessed theology, now has less value. I only know one entity that would so readily undermine Christ and that is satan. Christians need to come to terms with the New Covenant and the relationship it gives them and ALL nations with God and that covenant is now immutable. The Old Covenant is dead, long live the New.

Next we look at **the Jew**<sup>6</sup>. What is a Jew and where did they come from? *2Ki 16:5 Then Rezin king of Syria and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to war: and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome him. 2Ki 16:6 At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and **drave the Jews from Elath**: and the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there unto this day.* This is the first time that the inhabitants of the kingdom of Judah are called Jews, from the name of their original patriarch, and principal tribe Judah (יהודי yehudi). The term comes into play near the captivity of Israel (10 tribes) after which Judah remains in the land of Israel for another hundred years. Historically, Jews have descended mostly from the tribes of Judah, and Simeon, and partially

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<sup>6</sup> יהודי yehûdî Patronymic; a Jehudite (that is, Judaite or Jew), or descendant of Jehudah, Jew.



from the tribes of Benjamin and Levi, who had all together formed the ancient Kingdom of Judah (alongside the remnants of the Northern Kingdom of Israel who migrated to their Southern counterpart and assimilated there). Jew is not a term that was originally applied to the entire nation of Israel. By the time of Jesus, Jew has become a common term for the Israelites but at its origin a Jew was not representative of all Israel. Jew later became synonymous with Israel.

The religion of Moses also became synonymous with Judaism. *Joh 2:13 And the **Jews' Passover** was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, Joh 7:2 Now the **Jews' feast of tabernacles** was at hand. Jesus confirms the use of the term. Joh 4:22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for **salvation is of the Jews**.* Paul declares himself a Jew, *Act 21:39 But Paul said, I am a man which am a **Jew of Tarsus**, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people. Php 3:5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;* Paul might describe himself as a Jew as far as his religion, Israel would have been his nation and within that nation, he would have described himself as of the tribe of Benjamin. Judaism is the religion of the Jews, *Gal 1:13 For ye have heard of **my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion**, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:*

The Jews are counterpart to the gentiles in the New Testament (ἔθνος ethnos whence our word ethnic), *Gal 2:14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If **thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles**, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?* The Jews are then the upholders of the law of Moses.

Now there are two sorts of Jews in the scripture, Natural and Spiritual. *Gal 2:15 **We who are Jews by nature**, and not sinners of the Gentiles.* We would also describe these by nature as “outwardly” Jewish, in contrast to an “inward” or spiritual Jew. *Rom 2:28 For he **is not a Jew, which is one outwardly**; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: Rom 2:29 But **he is a Jew, which is one inwardly**; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.* Here is the definition of Jew that we should now use. Not an outwardly circumcised person but an inwardly circumcised person. That means that you and I and every believer in the Lord Jesus is a true Jew. *Php 3:3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*

God's Word version puts it nicely, *Eph 2:11 Remember that once **you were not Jewish physically**. Those who called themselves "the circumcised" because of what they had done to their bodies called you "the uncircumcised." Eph 2:12 Also, at that time you were without Christ. You were **excluded from citizenship in Israel**, and the pledges God made in his promise were foreign to you. You had no hope and were in the world without God. Eph 2:13 But now through Christ Jesus you, who were once far away, have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Eph 2:14 So he is our peace. In his body **he has made Jewish and non-Jewish people one** by breaking down the wall of hostility that kept them apart. Eph 2:15 He brought an end to the commandments and demands found in Moses' Teachings so that he could take Jewish and non-Jewish people and create one new humanity in himself. So he made peace. Eph 2:16 He also brought them back to God in one body by his cross, on which he killed the hostility. Eph 2:17 He came with the Good News of peace for you who were far away and for those who were near. Eph 2:18 So Jewish and non-Jewish people can go to the Father in one Spirit.*

*Eph 2:19 That is why you are no longer foreigners and outsiders but citizens together with God's people and members of God's family. GW.*

When you use the term Jew, be very careful to clarify what you mean and whether it is a natural or a spiritual Jew.

## **Chap 10. Definitions - The birth of Israel**

We continue to consider our definitions and now examine the term **Circumcision**<sup>7</sup>. This was instituted with Abraham *Gen 17:9 And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. Gen 17:10 This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.* Some like to think that Circumcision is a counterpart to Baptism, especially as Circumcision was applied to infants. Paedobaptism as opposed to Credobaptism. However, Circumcision was a male ritual, whereas Baptism is an adult (or believer's) ritual for men and women. *Act 8:12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.*

What did circumcision signify? *Rom 4:11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: Col 2:10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: Abraham received the promises of God when he was in effect a "gentile" and so is the Father of the uncircumcised as well. It showed that circumcision itself was not the righteous act, faith was, but circumcision sealed the act of faith. Circumcision didn't make you faithful, faithfulness made you circumcised. The act of circumcision was a type of putting off of sin. Like in a sense putting off the Old man, the Old nature. Col 2:11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Col 2:12 being buried with him in the baptism, in which also ye rose with him through the faith of the working of God, who did raise him out of the dead.* We see that circumcision obtains its highest meaning in Christ, in whom we too receive circumcision. Christ takes our sins upon Himself, wraps Himself in them and cuts them off.

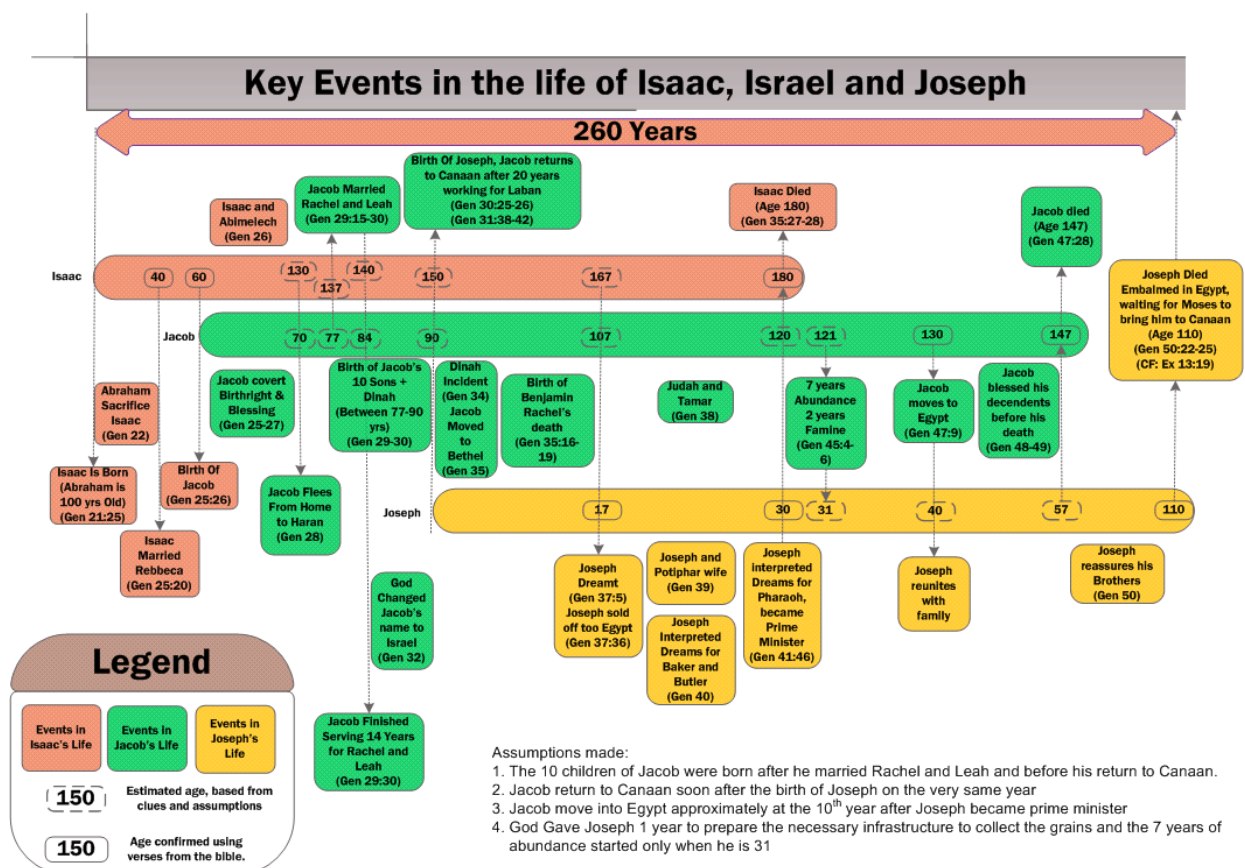
Physical circumcision was of no value unless the individual obeyed the law. In fact if you were a law breaker, circumcision was made void. *Rom 2:25 For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Rom 2:26 Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? Rom 2:27 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? Rom 2:28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: Rom 2:29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

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<sup>7</sup> מול *mûl* A primitive root; meaning to cut short, curtail (specifically the prepuce, that is, to circumcise); by implication to blunt; figuratively to destroy, cut down (in pieces), destroy.

Succinctly put, a true Jew is a person whose heart is circumcised, a spiritual person. Paul has exposed the earthly Jew, the natural Jew, whose praise comes from men not God as uncircumcised in the eyes of God ***“but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision”***. The true Jew, the real Jew, the spiritual Jew, is the believer who worships God in the spirit. The believing Disciples of Christ are Jews and Jews in the sense that the term originally intended. *Php 3:3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*. Should we perhaps use a different term for the natural Jew? Perhaps we should refer to them as people of the Old Covenant, because we are the Jews now, we are the Circumcision. National Israelis, Zionists, synagogue attendees, are not spiritual Jews. Christians can accurately be described as believing Jews.

Moving on we now try to understand and define the name **Israel**. For the sake of thoroughness this study will take a number of sessions to complete. In our minds we tend to see Israel as a Nation but we must remind ourselves that originally Israel was a person and that person's birth name was Jacob (“heel catcher”). Jacob was at heart a cheat, a liar and a coward. He had swindled his older twin brother out of his birthright and deceived his old father Isaac into giving him the blessing. He was also at this time an old cheat, being around 70 years old, not the boy he is often shown as in paintings (you calculate this backward from the time he meets Pharaoh in Egypt see chart by kind



permission of <https://tben.wordpress.com/> (“The hesitant Prizefighter”).

Here is a story of two brothers, feuding old age pensioners with an aging father (130 years old) in need of care. Imagine being in an old persons care home with your parents! Isaac couldn't see what was going on. *Gen 27:22 And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The*

voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. His mother, realising the danger he was in from his brother Esau, having cheated his brother out of the birthright, packed him off to his uncle Laban who was also of dubious character. What goes around comes around and Jacob was in turn cheated by Laban and ended up marrying his two daughters, Laban having made sure he got rid of the older one first, who was not that good looking. *Gen 29:17 And Leah's eyes were clouded, but Rachel was fair in face and form.* Cheating was a family trait but we are again reminded that the electing grace of God loved Jacob. Out of this rough clay God would model and mould His people.

Well you know the story and how after many years, Jacob gets Rachel to wife, serves Laban and eventually leaves to go back to his birthplace. **It is on the way back** after 20 years (he is now 90 years old), that Jacob's fears of his brother re-emerge and as he has to pass by his land, he fears for his life and the lives of those with him. It was during this journey that he has an encounter with God. *Gen 32:24 And Jacob was left alone; and there **wrestled a man** with him until the breaking of the day. Gen 32:25 And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched **the hollow of his thigh**; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. Gen 32:26 And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, **except thou bless me**. Gen 32:27 And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. Gen 32:28 And he said, **Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel**<sup>8</sup>: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. Gen 32:29 And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. Gen 32:30 And Jacob called the name of the place **Peniel**: for **I have seen God face to face**, and my life is preserved. Gen 32:31 And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. Gen 32:32 Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.*

Let us examine this event at Peniel. Who is **"the man"** and why are they wrestling? Of course it is obvious that an old man of 90 years could hardly succeed against this "Man God"<sup>9</sup>, so there is in this a great concession to Jacob. Note that they are not fighting, they are wrestling, grappling with each other. Why would you wrestle with someone? I believe that Jacob is trying to wrestle something from this "Man God", some blessing. *"I will not let thee go, **except thou bless me**".* There are almost shades of his struggles with his brother Esau, *Gen 25:22 And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD. Gen 25:23 And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.* Jacob is still wrestling for that blessing.

As to this man who refuses to give His name but who has the face of God, **"I have seen God face to face."** I will suggest that this is a Christophany or Theophany, a manifestation of Christ in the Older Testament, hence He shows Himself as man and God. It is quite clear that the pre-incarnate Christ appeared to the people of the OT, indeed, Jesus remarked that Abraham knew Him, *Joh 8:56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.* Christ followed the Israelites, *1Co 10:4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and **that Rock was Christ**. ....1Co 10:9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also*

<sup>8</sup> Israel means "power with God" or "He will rule with God", *Hos 12:3 He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had **power** with God:*

<sup>9</sup> Jehovah Saviour, the Christophany, Christ.

*tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.* Without doubt, Christ was present in the OT in many forms and He was recognisable as such.

Now, why did the ninety year old Jacob wrestle for a blessing? He was in a situation where he feared that his brother would wreak retribution upon him. The consequence of this would be that “the seed” of God’s promise would be wiped out. *Gen 32:11 Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. Gen 32:12 And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.* Jacob is very concerned to preserve his seed and this leads into the confrontation with the “Man God”.

We note in scripture that it is the male who is forensically, the bearer of the future generations. We would consider that women carry or bear children but it is the men who carry the dynasty as far as scripture is concerned. Levi paid tithes in Abraham, *Heb 7:8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. Heb 7:9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. Heb 7:10 For he (Levi) was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.* This known as seminal identity. The writer of the Hebrews uses the concept to show the supremacy of the priesthood of Melchizedek (Christ) over Levi. The same principle of seminal identity is used to explain how Adam’s sin passed down to all men.

This may explain the strange nature of the blessing. In wrestling, the “Man God” **“touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him”** Why did he touch the thigh? The word used for “thigh” is the same word that is used for “loins”. *Gen 32:32 Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh<sup>10</sup> (yereq), unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob’s thigh in the sinew that shrank. Gen 46:26 All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins (yarek), besides Jacob’s sons’ wives, all the souls were threescore and six; In touching the loins, an association and promise is made between the wrestlers. The “seed” are blessed.*

It is similar to the promise Abraham ask of his servant Eliezar of Damascus, *Gen 24:2 And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh (yereq): Gen 24:3 And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell:* Eliezar is in a manner of speaking making a promise to the seed of Abraham touching his loins.

Now what do we understand this seed to be? Jacob has had all of his children at this stage in his life, except Benjamin. There was only a remnant in his loins and I think that this is the point of the story. In a manner of speaking, this is God, blessing the seed, and is more typical than practical. Christ is blessing His seed yet to come. It also makes a distinction between the earthly seed of Jacob and the spiritual seed of Israel. This is exactly what Paul teaches, *Rom 9:8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.*

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<sup>10</sup> ירך yârêq From an unused root meaning to be soft; the thigh (from its fleshy softness); by euphemism the **generative parts**; figuratively a shank, flank, side.

You will have noted from scripture that Jacob has two encounters with God. The first immediately after he left his father's house, on the way to Laban at the place called Bethel. It is here he sees the stairway to heaven and heaven's gate. The second is on his return as he wrestles with God. God does not bless his seed on the outward journey so to speak, when they were all in his loins, only on the return when apart from a remnant, they are no longer there in his loins.

Yet I think that there is even more than that implied. In giving Jacob the name "Israel", which some translations interpret "Prince of God". An association between the Christophany (the Angel) and Jacob is established. Jacob would become the guardian of the "seed" until the true possessor of the "seed" would come in the flesh. Jacob would be a figure of the true Israel until Christ came to His inheritance. Now the "seed" of which we speak, were the inheritors of God's promise to Abraham, *Gen 12:2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: Gen 12:3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*

This means that the "Seed" of Abraham included far more souls than his natural family and that is the very point Paul makes in Galatians. *Gal 3:7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. Gal 3:8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. Gal 3:9 So then **they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.*** Brothers and sisters, it is written that you and I "are the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob". Live like it and enjoy it!

So what might we conclude so far? In the first place, Israel was a man formerly known as Jacob. Jacob was chosen by the grace of the Creator as the "seed" bearer, the carrier of the promises given to Abraham. The promises given to Abraham, passed to Isaac not Ishmael, then to Jacob not Esau. These promises were to Christ, *Gal 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to **thy seed, which is Christ.*** These promises were to Christ and the patriarchs were the guardians of the seed, so to speak.

These guardians and bearers of the seed were in turn supposed to be the servants of God. They were to be examples of the true servant of God. That servant was Christ. *Isa 49:3 And said unto me, Thou art **my servant, O Israel**, in whom I will be glorified. .... Isa 49:6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to **restore the preserved of Israel:** I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.* The light to the gentiles was Christ (as Simeon noted), the glory of the people. Yet Christ is also Israel.

So as the wheel turns full circle, it moves from the man Jacob, back to the son of man Christ, from Israel Natural to Israel Spiritual. However a lot happens in between and that DV we shall continue to study. Thus far then, the name Israel is a person AKA, Jacob. It is not yet the covenant nation.

## Chap 11. Definitions – Israel, a history of disobedience

We continue looking at our definitions and so far, we have seen that Christians are "true Jews", "Circumcised of heart" and "the children of Abraham". Outwardly circumcised people who break the

law are not the children of Abraham. We saw that the promises that God gave to Abraham and his seed were not to genetic offspring but to spiritual offspring in Christ, His children of faith, the believing people of God. We also saw that When Jacob wrestled with God, he was blessed by a change in name, to Israel, which has many interpretations but within the context of the story, it means “one who overcame with God”. I think that this is significant for all of God’s children because they too must be “overcomers” or conquerors, *Rom 8:37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us*. The blessings of God, the promises of God should be our heart’s desire and we should not let go of the hem of His garment until we have received them.

We continue to examine the use of this word “Israel”. The scriptures make it quite clear that the promises that were made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (the same promises passed to each) were, *Gen 13:14 And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: Gen 13:15 For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. Gen 13:16 And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. These promises were fulfilled in Christ, Gal 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ*. Keep these words in mind because the promises are not to an earthly nation of Israel but to a person, Jesus, the true Servant, the true Israel.

We now have to get ourselves into the mindset of these Patriarchs. We need to see what they saw in regard to these promises. Did they have an expectation of an earthly inheritance, a national homeland called Israel, on earth? The answer is quite clear and it is that **they did not**. *Heb 11:9 By faith he (Abraham) sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: Heb 11:10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. .... Heb 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that **they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth***. They lived in a landscape of types and shadows to remind them of their true home.

This is a very clear statement that the patriarchs viewed Canaan, the “land of promise”, as a foreign land, a land of strangers. It was not “home” to them and they never viewed it as home. They lived in temporary shelters, tents, because they looked for a city that had foundations (like the house on the rock). They were looking for something permanent. Their demeanour marked them out as “**strangers and pilgrims on earth**”, people with no permanent place here and no desire for one. If we have not the same attitude then we do not have the same faith. Our home is not here. They had no pied-à-terre, no foot on the ground. They embraced the future promises and embraced them by faith. This is hardly the language of people who wanted to set up a kingdom on earth. If they did not have this expectation of an earthly nation or kingdom, why is it that so many people in churches today believe that they do? Why is it, people expect a “pop up” nation of Israel, just before the day of judgement? The reestablishment of the corrupt and unbelieving Jews, who killed the Messiah when He came to deliver them? The answer is that such people do not believe what Abraham, Isaac and Jacob believed and more seriously, they undermine the work of Christ.

Jacob became Israel and later the term was applied to the 12 tribes descended from Jacob’s offspring. These tribe’s fortunes declined after Joseph died in Egypt and the nation suffered



persecution. The Lord then delivered the tribes through Moses. It was as one commentator has observed easier to get the Israelites out of Egypt, than to get Egypt out of Israel. It did not end well for most of those who escaped Egypt, because with the exception of two families, all of those people who came out of wilderness aged over 20 years, died in the wilderness. Stephen recounts the history of disobedience that characterised the Israelites, *Act 7:39 (Moses) To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt, Act 7:40 Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. Act 7:41 And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. Act 7:42 **Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness?***

Stephen is quoting our brother Amos, *Amo 5:25 **Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?** Amo 5:26 But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves.* It is an indictment upon the worship the nation offered in the wilderness. When we read Exodus and Leviticus, which deal with the Tabernacle service and the sacrificial offerings, we are looking at the Divine intention, the perfect model of worship but this clearly did not happen. The nation as a whole continues its spiral into decline.

Following the entry into Canaan and after the death of Joshua, in the time of the Judges of Israel, the nation plunged into cycles of decline and revival. The nation was only as good as the Judge. After the last Judge, Samuel, Israel demanded a King, like all the other nations around her. This was an act of rebellion and a rejection of the Theocracy, a rejection of God as King. *1Sa 8:6 But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. 1Sa 8:7 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but **they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.** 1Sa 8:8 According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.*

This was not a recent apostasy; it was ongoing from the first day of the Exodus to the captivity in Babylon. *Jer 7:25 **Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them: Jer 7:26 Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers.*** God's comment is clear, they had forsaken Him and served other God's, ever since the day they came out of Egypt. None the less, He lets them choose a King, Saul, but he is not the man after God's heart, he is the choice of man's heart and he is soon deposed. Paul recounts the history, *Act 13:22 And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, **a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.*** David brings the Nation of Israel stability and under his son Solomon, the nation achieves its pinnacle of wealth, status and growth (extending as far as the Euphrates in the North) but it is short lived. Solomon failed his Lord, *1Ki 11:9 And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because **his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, 1Ki 11:10 And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he***

kept not that which the LORD commanded. 1Ki 11:11 Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, **I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.**

This marked another transition in the fortunes of the nation. It is torn in two. The prophet delivers the news, 1Ki 11:31 And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will **give ten tribes to thee:** 1Ki 11:32 (But he shall have **one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel:**) (What was the 12<sup>th</sup> Tribe? Levi?).

From this time onwards, when you read about Israel, you are now talking about the Northern tribes (Reuben, Simeon, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Ephraim, Manasseh), the Southern tribes being Judah, Benjamin (and remnants of Levi) which as we have seen adopted the name Jehudi or Jews.

The Kings of Israel<sup>11</sup> are generally apostate and the Kings of Judah vary in their allegiance to Jehovah. Have you wondered why the nation falls away so quickly after Solomon and follows the false god's of Jeroboam? They were already apostate. 1Ki 12:28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said

unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 1Ki 12:29 And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. 1Ki 12:30 And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. I think that Israel was already apostate. Jeroboam made it easier to maintain apostasy, keeping them as far away from Jerusalem as possible.

		Good King	
		Evil King	
Ruler (Judah)	From/To (BC)		Reign (yr)
Rehoboam	931	913	17
Abijah	913	911	3
Asa	911	870	41
Jehoshaphat	870	848	25
Jehoram	848	841	8
Ahaziah	841	841	1
Athaliah	841	835	6
Joash	835	796	40
Amaziah	796	767	29
Uzziah (Azariah)	767	740	52
Jotham	740	732	16
Ahaz	732	716	16
Hezekiah	716	687	29
Manasseh	687	642	55
Amon	642	640	2
Josiah	640	608	31
Jehoahaz	608	608	0.25
Jehoiakim	608	597	11
Jehoiachin	597	597	0.25
Zedekiah	597	586	11

Good and evil			
Co-Rex			
Ruler (Israel)	From/To (BC)	Reign (yr)	
Jeroboam I	931	910	22
Nadab	910	909	2
Baasha	909	886	24
Elah	886	885	2
Zimri	885	885	0.02
Omri	885	874	12
Ahab	874	853	22
Ahaziah	853	852	2
Joram	852	841	12
Jehu	841	814	28
Jehoahaz	814	798	17
Jehoash	798	782	16
Jeroboam II	782	753	41
Zachariah	753	752	0.5
Shallum	752	752	0.08
Menahem	752	742	10
Pekahiah	742	740	2
Pekah	740	732	20
Hoshea	732	712	9

If you think about it, people never went to "Church" each week in Israel, the Sabbath was a private day of rest. There were also very few compulsory festivals, Exo 34:23 Thrice in the year shall all your men children appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel. There was not a lot of religious input for those who lived in the remote parts of the country and there were no bibles as we know them, to study the word of God. Left to themselves, I imagine that it was easy to lapse into a nominal form of religion. Think about it. If there were no weekly organised religious services in our country, if we did not have bibles, it would not be long, before, if left to ourselves that we would fall away into the

<sup>11</sup> Co-rex is a joint ruler. Similar to Latin regulus.

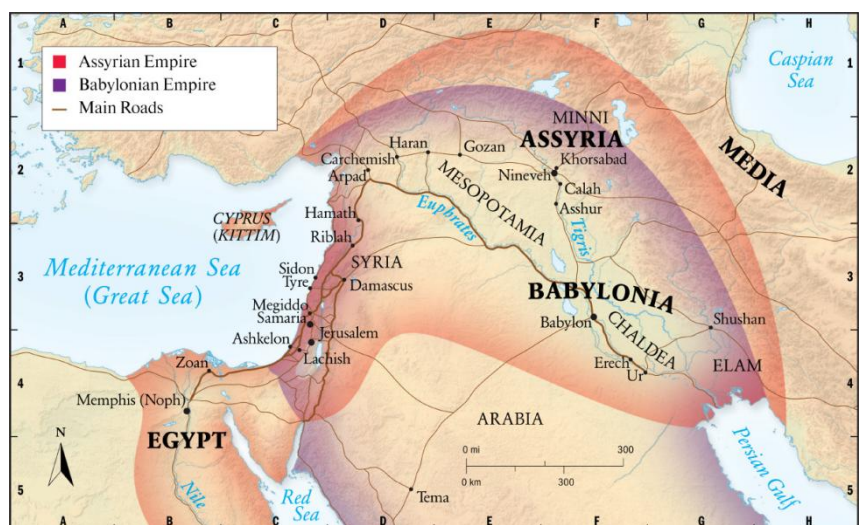
world and find alternative distractions. In fact many people who feign Christianity already live more for the world than for Christ.

Thus far, we hardly have a picture of a godly nation or a united nation. Israel, rather what has become Israel, is apostate. Judah, those who are now known as Jews, vacillates in terms of their allegiance to God. Israel is plagued by apostate Kings, Judah has only a few decent kings. Worse still captivity beckons and the nation is heading for judgement because they have failed to observe the land Sabbath. God promised that if they failed to observe this, *Lev 26:34 Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths. Lev 26:35 As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest; **because it did not rest in your sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it.***

For 490 years, Israel had failed to observe the land Sabbath<sup>12</sup>. They owed God 70 years ( $490/7 = 70$ . One in seven). *2Ch 36:20 And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: 2Ch 36:21 To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, **to fulfil threescore and ten years.*** Israel had not observed one single land Sabbath from the time of the first king (Saul) until the last king Jehoiachin (Zedekiah was appointed by Babylon). This seems to suggest that under the kings, Israel was not considered to be the land of God but the land of man and man would not let it rest. If it were the land of God, the land of God's people, they would have acknowledged it.

You say to me that so far, I have not painted a very good picture of the nation of Israel. That I have shown it as apostate and rebellious. You are right, I have and if you had lived in the days of King Ahab and you had spoken to brother Elijah, he would have bemoaned that he was in a minority. He thought at one time that he was the only believer left in Israel but God had at least 7,000 other faithful people. If the population was around 350,000 as some have estimated (probably on the low side), it suggests that 1 in 50 (or even less) was a practicing or believing Israelite. The religion of Jehovah had virtually disappeared, only a remnant remained. This idea of a remnant being saved was foretold by Isaiah, *Isa 1:9 Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a **very small remnant**, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.* They were on the verge of extinction but this teaching on the **remnant** is for another ministry.

We return to consider the demise of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, Israel and Judah. Israel was carried away by the Assyrians first of all, followed about 100 years later by the captivity of Judah by the Babylonian empire. Assyria sent some of its own population to



<sup>12</sup> Those seventh day observers in our generation should also observe a land Sabbath to be consistent but that is the hypocrisy of the sabbatarians. They pick and choose the scripture.

take over the Northern Kingdom but they had some problems. 2Ki 17:24 *And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.* 2Ki 17:25 *And so it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, that **they feared not the LORD**: therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which slew some of them.* 2Ki 17:26 *Wherefore they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore he hath sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land.*

The solution, or so they thought was to send a priest to advise them about the God of the land. 2Ki 17:28 *Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD.* 2Ki 17:29 ***Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt.*** This marks the start of the Samaritan religion, a bastard version of Judaism.

What happened to those “ten” tribes that went to Assyria? There is no record that they returned, creating the myth of the lost ten tribes of Israel. In the NT we find only four tribes mentioned. Judah, Benjamin, Levi and Asher. Asher, you recall was the tribe to which Anna the Prophetess belonged, who met the infant Christ at the Temple. Asher would have been taken into the Assyrian captivity so how did they survive? One possibility is that they joined the Southern kingdom, about the time of the captivity of Israel (the Northern kingdom). King Hezekiah of Judah (the Southern kingdom) heads a revival and invites the Northern kingdom to join him. 2Ch 30:1 *And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover unto the LORD God of Israel.* Not all accepted but some did. 2Ch 30:11 *Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem.* 2Ch 30:12 *Also in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of the LORD.*

What may also have driven this migration South, is the fact that at the time of Hezekiah’s Passover, the Northern kingdom was being resettled in Assyria. When the time came for Judah to go into captivity, other tribes that migrated would have been taken with them. However this is speculation, what is not, is that the Northern kingdom becomes assimilated into the culture of Assyria and effectively disappears. Once in Assyria, they created a synthetic religion, they merged ideas and shared gods with their captors. 2Ki 17:33 *They feared the LORD, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence.* 2Ki 17:34 *Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not the LORD, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandment which the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel;*

On the one hand they would claim to fear the Lord, that is serve God, but it was totally false worship. It happens today. Churches claim to worship God but their beliefs have nothing to do with the word of God. They have adopted the philosophies and beliefs of the unbelievers and woven them into their system. Israel of the 10 tribes is a lesson for our times on apostasy. Mar 7:7 *Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

As for Judah the Southern Kingdom, they go to Babylon by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. It was not such a bad deal because they actually flourished in Babylon. It wasn't a slave camp, as we shall see and many who went there declined to return. This region became a bastion of Judaism for Millennia.

Let us summarise Israel so far. The original name Israel was applied to a man Jacob. Jacob's twelve sons became Israel the nation at the Exodus. The land distribution gave Joseph two portions (Manasseh and Ephraim) whereas Levi had no land, so Israel is now 13 tribes. After the death of Solomon, Israel becomes the Northern 10 tribes. These 10 tribes, about 1 million souls, disappear in the Assyrian captivity and never return having been assimilated culturally and religiously. The Jews have a similar experience in Babylonia but retain their identity.

Next time we look at the return from Babylonia.

## Chap 12. Definitions – Israel, punishment and exile

The captivity was predicted as far back as the time of Moses. *Deu 30:1 And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee, Deu 30:2 And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; Deu 30:3 That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee.* What we learn from this is that the tenancy conditions for the land of Israel (Eretz Israel) were repentance and obedience. The idea that some future reestablishment of Israel as an unrepentant nation would happen, is at odds with scripture. Furthermore, did the people of the exile want to return?

Our study continues looking at the term Israel, which at the time of the Assyrian captivity was limited to 10 tribes of the Northern kingdom. It should go without saying that they, Israel at that time, did not represent all of the sons of Jacob. We saw the demise of the 10 tribes under the rule of Assyria and their King Shalmaneser V and their assimilation. The region was as volatile then as in our own day and within 100 years, Assyria falls to the Babylonian Empire (612BC) and under the rule of Nebuchadnezzar II, **Judah and her companions, the Jews, are taken away.** *2Ki 24:11 And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, and his servants did besiege it. 2Ki 24:12 And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign.*

Stripped of her elite, the land of Israel is left to the poor but Judah however was able to live a comfortable life in Babylon. It was not a slave camp, in fact many of these great conquerors were interested in assimilating the wisdom and technology of other cultures (the west developed its space programme through German rocket scientists).

Jeremiah speaks to the Jews, *Jer 29:4 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon; Jer 29:5 Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; Jer 29:6 Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not*

*diminished. Jer 29:7 And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace. Jer 29:8 For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed. Jer 29:9 For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the LORD. Jer 29:10 For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. It was so comfortable in Babylon that some Jews never bothered to leave.*

The prophet Jeremiah is often portrayed as a gloom and doom prophet. Bearers of bad news are sometimes called “Jeremiahs”. This is far from the truth because the Prophet encourages Judah on so many occasions. Jeremiah was so confident of this restoration that he brought land before the captivity. *Jer 32:8 So Hanameel mine uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the LORD, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself. Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD..... Jer 32:14 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days. Jer 32:15 For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; **Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land.** Jeremiah never returned to claim his land but the principle was clear. If the prophets spoke about Israel restored to its land as Jeremiah did here, it was in this time **NOT** some 3000 plus years into the distant future.*

Towards the end of the 70 years captivity, Balshazzar holds his blasphemous feast but the writing was on the wall for his kingdom. Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus the hated last king of Babylon and Babylon falls without bloodshed as Persia takes over. A messiah arises who was prophesied by Isaiah 200 years before this event. *Isa 45:1 Thus saith the LORD to his messiah (anointed), to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; Isa 45:2 I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: Cyrus is a type of the Messiah Jesus.*

Cyrus was a decent and respectful man to all the cultures and people he ruled. He was also aware of Isaiah's prophecy and he obeys the command of God. Under Cyrus king of Persia, the order is given to rebuild Jerusalem, *Ezr 1:1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Ezr 1:2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.*

There were three different times the Jews (Judah et al) were taken into captivity in Babylon. There were also three different times that Jews were permitted to return to their homeland. The first group of Jews who returned were led by Zerubbabel (royal line of Christ) in 536 B.C. *Ezr 2:64 The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore, Ezr 2:65 Beside their servants and their maids, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and there were among them two hundred singing men and singing women. About 80 years*

later, the second group of Jews returned in 458 B. C. They were led by Ezra, a scribe of God's law. The third group to return were led by Nehemiah in 444 B.C. fourteen years after this.

This first small returning group began the rebuilding of the Temple but it was nothing compared to the original. *Hag 2:1 In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of the LORD by the prophet Haggai, saying, Hag 2:2 Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying, Hag 2:3 Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing? ..... Hag 2:7 And I will shake all nations, and **the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory**, saith the LORD of hosts. .... Hag 2:9 The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.*

The returning exiles are now called by the name of "Israel" but they are only a faint expression of the original nation. *Ezr 5:1 Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, **prophesied unto the Jews** that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them ..... Ezr 6:16 And **the children of Israel**, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy. **Israel now obtains a new meaning.***

Many Jews decided to stay where they were, after all they had been encouraged to put down roots, albeit temporarily and their community thrived and even married royalty. Rachel's descendents Mordecai and Hadassah are doing well. *Est 2:5 Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite; Est 2:6 Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. Est 2:7 And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter. You know the story and how the wicked Haman is hung on his own gallows for his anti-semitism and jealousy at the Jew's success. The festival of Purim still remembers this deliverance Est 9:24 **Because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that is, the lot, to consume them, and to destroy them; Esther becomes queen of Persia and Mordecai the prime minister. The captives did well.***

Why did the Jews stay? Jerusalem had been broken down, the Temple destroyed, here in Babylon and Shushan they had freedom of religion, protection from the state, the opportunity to improve their lives. Why not stay is the question, because it was a whole lot of hard work to go back to Jerusalem? Under the rule of Ahasuerus (Xerxes who married Esther) the Jews flourished.

Hoseah gives a prophecy about the time that the Northern Kingdoms go into captivity. *Hos 1:1 The word of the LORD that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel. The prophecy is to both kingdoms (North and South, Israel and Judah). It foretells the coming days, days which shall run to the time of Messiah. Hos 3:4 **For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: Hos 3:5 Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.** So how did*



the exiles conduct worship and deal with sin and forgiveness, “without sacrifice”? How could they live without a king and without a sacrifice?

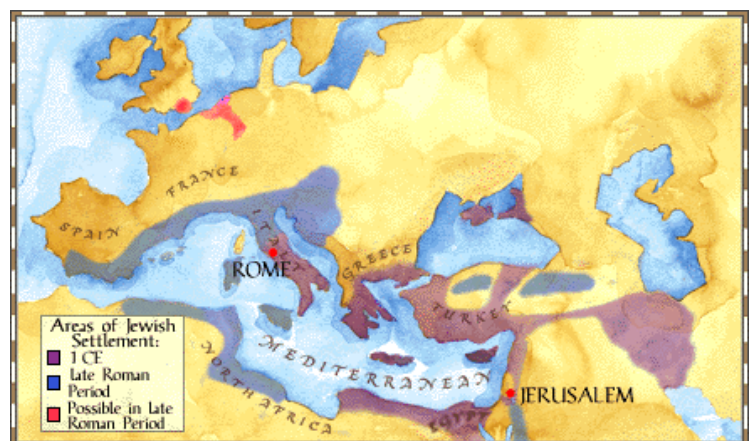
The question as to how they dealt with sin in the eyes of God, not having a Temple and sacrificial rituals is an interesting problem. How essential to the Jewish life of the Diaspora, these dispersed Jews, was blood sacrifice? They could, I would assume, be able to enjoy Passover because originally founded before the priesthood, this could be killed by the heads of the household. Circumcision could be conducted by the head of the household. Other sacrifices should be fulfilled by Priests however, this is the provision that was made, way back in time of King Solomon.

*1Ki 8:46 If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near; 1Ki 8:47 Yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness; 1Ki 8:48 And so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name: 1Ki 8:49 Then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause, 1Ki 8:50 And forgive thy people that have sinned against thee, and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against thee, and give them compassion before them who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them:*

Daniel looks to Jerusalem, *Dan 6:10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.* Scattered to the four winds, the Jews look back from new lands. It is as if the shadows are falling upon the ancient rituals and the decaying fabric, in anticipation of a new age to come.

While it may be true that the second temple in Jerusalem began to offer sacrifice again, it was lacking many of the original temple artefacts, in particular, the ark of the covenant. Sacrifice could not have followed the strict rules laid out, for example, on the Day of Atonement. *Lev 16:14 And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.* As we have already seen in an earlier chapter, Roman General Pompey (68BC) saw the empty Holy of Holies and wondered what all the fuss was about. However, these deficiencies are not picked up on in the NT writings and Christ Himself makes no comment about it and seems to view it as a valid institution. It was all, in His eyes, we might say, Kosher (kashrut).

Now those who did not return from exile had other issues. They established communities around the Mediterranean and in Persia (Iran) and felt no pressing need to return. There was no prophecy driving them to re-establish the land of



Israel, to develop a Nation State. If they had understood the prophets to have had an earthly Israel in mind they did not seem committed to it. They were happy and successful where they were.

By the first century B.C there were no less than 1,000,000 Jews in Egypt, in a total of 8,000,000 inhabitants; of these 200,000 lived in Alexandria, whose total population was 500,000. There were 1,000,000 Jews in Syria at the time of Nero, and 700,000 in Palestine, and an additional 1,500,000 in other places, thus estimating that there were in the first century 4,200,000 Jews in the world. The majority of Jews by then lived outside of Israel as indeed they do today.

The foundations for the future of Judaism were being laid in Babylon. In the laying of those foundations we shall also see that they enabled the rapid spread of Christianity. It was during the captivity it is suggested, that Synagogues began to develop in Babylonia. Far from their home, they established worship around the Torah, and the synagogues become places where you could hear the scriptures read. In all probability, they began to learn more of the Scriptures in captivity than they did back in Israel.

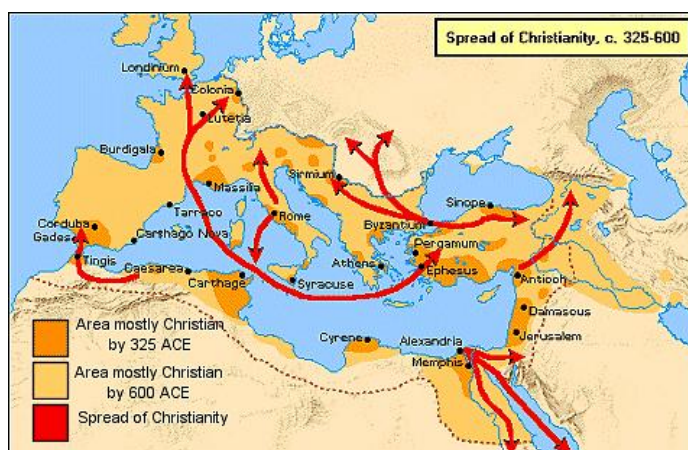
We have not dwelt on the other nations and kingdoms at play in the period between the exile and the birth of Jesus. There was rise of the Seleucid empire following the death of Alexander, the Roman Empire and the rebellions of the Maccabees but you can read of those for yourselves. I will however mention one thing that I think was critical to the success of the propagation of the Gospel.

A small city state in Greece is on the rise when the Jews are returning from exile. It is Macedonia. Eventually, the son of Philip, Alexander who was tutored by Aristotle, would found over 70 cities and create an empire that stretched across three continents and covered around two million square miles. The entire area from Greece in the west, north to the Danube, south into Egypt and as far to the east as the Indian Punjab, was linked together in a vast international network of trade and commerce. At 25 years of age he was the great king of Persia.

After the conquests of Alexander the Great (roughly 336-323 BC) the Greek language underwent far-reaching changes. Alexander carried the Attic-Ionic form of the language, along with Greek culture more generally, far into the Near East where it became the standard language of commerce and government, existing alongside many local languages. Greek was adopted as a second language by the native people of these regions and was ultimately transformed into what has come to be called the Hellenistic Koiné or common Greek. The Greek of the New Testament.

Two things in my mind led to the rapid establishment of Christianity. 1. The widespread use of Common Greek (Paul writes to the Romans in Greek not Latin and Peter from Babylon in Greek) 2. The establishment of Jewish Communities.

By the time of the birth of Christ, the Jews lived all around the Mediterranean and far into Asia Minor down to the Arabian sea. It was to these congregations that the Apostles and Evangelists took the Gospel of the Messiah Jesus and the rest we know is history.



## Chap 13. Definitions – Israel at the time of Christ

We have seen that the term Israel is open to many interpretations. It changes its form through time. Israel before the Exodus is different to Israel after the Exodus. The Theocracy is displaced when it enters Canaan and develops into a Monarchy. The prophetic writings are also added to the Torah, the Law. Israel after the Exodus is different from Israel after the conquest of Canaan and yet again Israel after the Captivity is different to Israel before the Captivity. Israel at the time of Jesus has changed over the centuries but it is still Israel. Worship changes, the law and covenants are added, the Prophets add their contribution and all the way through and up to the time Paul writes, they are Israel and they are Jews. *Rom 9:4 Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.*

		Natural	Spiritual	Natural	Spiritual	Natural	Spiritual
Beliefs	Federal head	Governance		Structure		Names	
Pre-Torah	Person	Dynasty		Family		Sons of God	
Torah	Jehovah	Theocracy		Tribes		Israel	
Torah Prophets	Saul	Monarchy		Nation		Jews	
Torah Prophets Gospel	Jesus	Christocracy		Church		Christians	

So then, we have established that Israel changes its form over time. What passes for Israel depends very much where you are in history. This is important because when the prophets talk about Israel. What Israel are they talking about? *Eze 20:39 Go ahead and worship your idols for now, you **Israelites**, because soon I will no longer let you dishonour me by offering gifts to them. You will have no choice but to obey me! Eze 20:40 When that day comes, everyone in **Israel** will worship me on Mount Zion, my holy mountain in Jerusalem. I will once again call you my own, and I will accept your sacred offerings and sacrifices. Eze 20:41 When I bring you home from the places where you are now scattered, I will be pleased with you, just as I am pleased with the smell of the smoke from your sacrifices. Every nation on earth will see that I am holy, Eze 20:42 and you will know that I, the LORD, am the one who brought you back **to Israel**, the land I promised your ancestors.* CEV. Remember that Abraham did not look to Canaan for that permanent residence. He looked to another city.

Now we shall examine the condition of “Israel” at the time of Christ. Following the wars and conquests in the region following the Babylonian captivity, the land of Israel is considerably reduced in size and by the time of Jesus is virtually a puppet state of Rome. *Luk 3:1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Luk 3:2 Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests.* There is a tense alliance between the Jewish King Herod and the Roman governor Pontius Pilate. The one thing that brought them together and the one thing that they agreed upon, was the execution of Jesus. *Luk 23:12 And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.*

Only four of the original tribes have living relatives mentioned in the NT, Judah, Levi, Benjamin and Asher. I will suggest that due to the national upheavals, the genealogical records were probably lost. Let us face it, it is hard enough for us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to trace ancestors back 200 years, so imagine how difficult it would have been to trace ancestors back to the twelve patriarchs. Did it really matter (apart from the priestly line)? Another change was that the Temple in Jerusalem was

not the second Temple that the captives had rebuilt when they came back from Babylon. It was a new structure built by Herod the Great 20 years before the birth of Jesus.

This Temple was destroyed by the Roman general Titus and his 10<sup>th</sup> Legion in AD 70 after a Jewish revolt. All that remains of it today is the western wall, known as the Wailing Wall. The wall has been a site for Jewish prayer and pilgrimage for centuries; the earliest source mentioning Jewish attachment to the site dates back to the 4th century. After the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, the wall came under Jordanian control and Jews were barred from the site for 19 years until Israel captured the Old City in 1967.

Jesus comes as another voice in this ancient Jewish world seething with rebellion and dissent. The Zealots, an ultra-nationalistic group, proclaimed revolution to be God's solution. Gamaliel recounts the times, *Act 5:36 For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought. Act 5:37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.* The Essenes withdrew, waiting anxiously for the Messiah to lead a violent overthrow of the Romans and their Jewish supporters. The Sadducees apparently practiced a form of cooperation since it was Rome who kept them securely in their position over the Temple and therefore over the people. The Herodions appeared satisfied with the Herod dynasty. The Pharisees, condemning Rome's pagan excesses, were removed from politics and viewed the foreign oppressors as God's hand punishing his people for their unfaithfulness to the Torah. The country was in turmoil, each faction longing in a different way for the freedom they desired. To this climate of confusion, hatred, and division, many so-called messiahs came and went, each preaching his own brand of salvation<sup>13</sup>.

It is against this background that another voice begins to echo. It is not yet a voice calling the gentile nations, it is a voice calling Israel, the Jews, the voice of Elijah, the voice of John the Baptist. *Mat 11:13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. Mat 11:14 And if ye will receive it, **this is Elias, which was for to come.*** The last words of the Older Testament prophecy reach out to the New and link hands across time, *Mal 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: Mal 4:6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.* Many still see this prophecy as unfulfilled despite Jesus' words.

John the Baptist explains that the ministry of Jesus is to purge Israel, to winnow the Nation and burn the chaff. *Luk 3:16 John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: Luk 3:17 **Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.*** *Luk 3:18 And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people.* Jesus did not come unannounced and when He appeared it was to purge and sieve the Nation of its chaff. There and then and NOT in some distant future.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://followtherabbi.com/guide/detail/the-jewish-revolts>

Jesus as a Jew, led the Nation and was Baptised by John. Following this, Jesus announces Himself in the synagogue in Nazareth. *Luk 4:16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. Luk 4:17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, Luk 4:18 **The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, Luk 4:19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.** Luk 4:20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. Luk 4:21 And he began to say unto them, **This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.***

Please read the whole of Isaiah 61.

Isaiah spoke of events in Jesus day, not some distant future day beyond that. This is the day to choose liberty or remain in captivity. From that time forward, Jesus relentlessly demonstrates the power of God as He preaches the Kingdom of God.

What is the Kingdom of God? It is the place where God is King, where God has dominion and that is within the individual. *Luk 17:20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the Kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Luk 17:21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, **the Kingdom of God is within you.***

There were those who looked for an earthly kingdom, an external kingdom but that was not to be. When that earthly kingdom existed, for the most part, the citizens of Israel were at odds with their king. They wanted an earthly kingdom without the inward constraints, just as they did when they deposed God at the time of Saul. This will not happen again because, *Joh 18:36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: **but now is my kingdom not from hence.***

It does not get clearer than that. There is no longer a place on earth for a physical Kingdom of God, whatever form, national structure or identity it might claim. If you want to be part of His kingdom, then you must submit to King Jesus. You must become a disciple and a servant.

I would like to make some general observations on the purpose of Jesus ministry and how it links what we call the Old Testament to the New. He comes as the Saviour. *Mat 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for **he shall save his people from their sins.** Mat 1:22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Mat 1:23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.* Firstly He comes to Israel and then after His death to the Gentiles.

When Jesus came to Israel, He came to a nation already in relationship with God. Gentiles could enter the covenant but it was not a frequent occurrence. *Exo 12:48 And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.* To Israel belong, as Paul notes, *Rom 9:4 Who are Israelites; to whom*



*pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Rom 9:5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.*

Jesus encouraged the Jews to continue in the word. *Joh 8:31 Then said Jesus **to those Jews which believed on him**, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;* The Jews or Israelites are to all intents and purposes “saved” when they believed on Jesus. When Paul preaches to the Jews in Antioch and expounds Christ from the scriptures, *Acts 13:38 Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you **the forgiveness of sins**: 13:39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses*, Paul shows that acceptance of Christ through faith is a natural continuation (to its fulfilment) of what they already have. *Act 13:43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them **to continue in the grace of God**.* They made a seamless transition to the New Testament or Covenant in the blood of Christ.

This Gospel starts in Jerusalem and ripples out to the Diaspora as directed by Christ at His ascension, *Act 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.* It begins in Jerusalem the epicentre of the explosion, then to the surrounding country of Judah, then wider to Samaria (the land of the 10 tribes) and finally to the whole wide world. John the Baptist’s message, the Elijah who was to come precedes that Gospel, *Act 18:24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, **came to Ephesus**. Act 18:25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, **knowing only the baptism of John**. Act 18:26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.* The Gospel of Jesus was overtaking the work of John.

A further event that gave impetus to this spread occurred on the day of Pentecost as recorded by Luke in Acts. Pentecost was one of the three compulsory festivals. *Exo 23:14 Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. Exo 23:15 Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty:) Exo 23:16 And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field. Exo 23:17 Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord GOD.* Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. The latter were harvest festivals.

Pentecost would have marked a great gathering of Jews and proselytes from all over the world as it was then. *Act 2:5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.* Many would be there for the feast. Have you ever wondered why the scripture would record the details of those attending, some nations now unrecognisable to us today? *Act 2:9 Parthians (Pathros), and Medes (Elam), and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia (Shinar), and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Act 2:10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the*

*parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, **Jews and proselytes**, Act 2:11 Cretes and Arabians (Cush), we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.*

Why are these names specifically mentioned? I believe that it is to confirm the Messianic fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah. *Isa 11:10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.* Using a more modern translation makes it clear, *Isa 11:11 And it shall be in that day, that the Lord shall again shew his hand (a second time), to be zealous for the remnant that is left of the people, which shall be left by the Assyrians, and that from Egypt, and from the country of Babylon, and from Ethiopia, and from the Elamites, and from the rising of the sun, and out of Arabia.* Brenton.

The very tribes spoken of in Isaiah's prophecy are here on the day of Pentecost. Coincidence or design? Sadly, people focus too much on the "tongues" experience of Pentecost rather than the great deliverance of "Israel". It is the Jerusalem Exodus, "**the second time**" that God saves Israel. *Luk 9:31 Appearing in glory, **they spoke of His Exodus**, which He was about **to accomplish in Jerusalem**.* LITV. The law and the prophets, Moses and Elijah appearing with Jesus, were in agreement with Christ, that this was a deliverance, an Exodus from Jerusalem on Earth. No more earthly Jerusalem for it is now above. *Gal 4:26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.*

Pentecost is the greatest proof that no future earthly nation taking the name of Israel will make a claim on this earth. It serves no purpose and has no need of it. Those gathered at Pentecost were never told to look for a home on earth or a restored earthly nation of Israel. Here on the day of Pentecost, Israel gathers from all of the corners whence it was scattered. They are united in Christ by a miracle that takes us back to the very origins of Babylon itself, the place of the exile. To the city built by the great hunter Nimrod. To the place where God split apart the coalition of men against Him and confounded their language, the place of confusion, Babel. This act, purposed to divide mankind, is now reversed to unify mankind in Christ through the Holy Spirit of God, through the language of the Spirit. It shows perfectly that, *Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.* 3,000 souls responded on that day alone and the prophecy of Joel as we have seen, was fulfilled.

This Gospel Word would go into the whole world, to an expanding kingdom. It was not a message about bringing people back to earthly Israel, not a message about establishing an earthly kingdom, not a message to anticipate the rebuilding of ancient earthly temples, not an implosion but an explosion. Israel has become what it was intended to become, a people fit for service. It has become the Israel of God. It is called the Church.

There are two more subjects that I wish to explore before we close on this examination of Israel.

1. Israel as it reaches its perfection in the Person of Christ, Israel, the Son and Servant of God.
2. Anti-Semitism and how Paul fights against it.



## Chap 14. Definitions – The Servant Israel and conversations between God

This Easter day we recall the greatest sacrifice in the history of the Universe. It is not only that, it is the culmination of perfect service, the supreme example of selfless obedience to the will of the Creator. In that sacrifice, we are set an example of the true servant, who lays aside his life in the service of God. Jim Elliot the missionary saw the truth of this when he said, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose” and in doing so, gave his life for the Gospel. I do not say that everyone is asked to die for the gospel but everyone is certainly called to die to self. *Gal 2:20 I have been put to death on the cross with Christ; still I am living; no longer I, but Christ is living in me; and that life which I now am living in the flesh I am living by faith, the faith of the Son of God, who in love for me, gave himself up for me.* BBE.

All that the Lord wanted from His people was service. The nation of Israel was intended to serve God, to be a servant nation and an example to mankind. You might think by the way people then and today approach religion is that it was the other way around. The purpose of God was to serve Israel. No, Israel was called to serve the purposes of the Creator. Israel was delivered to serve. *Exo 4:23 And I say unto thee, Let my son go, **that he may serve me**: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn.* I am going to suggest that this service to God is best exemplified in the life of Christ who becomes our example. *1Pe 2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, **leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps**:* *1Pe 2:22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:*

Why then we ask, if this example of service is so important, was its example not revealed at the very beginning? Why did history have to run such a ragged course to the revelation of the Messiah? Surely, when we expect certain behaviours and attitudes, we set the example at the beginning, not later on when things go amiss? Surely, from a human perspective, would it not have been far more beneficial to reveal Jesus at the fall of mankind so that the example was there for all to follow from the start? More people could have embraced Him and fewer fallen before Him? It is like, and I use the thought reverently, bringing on your star player at half time rather than the beginning of the game. Why not field your best team and best player from the beginning?

I think that there are a number of reasons that will answer this question. Firstly Adam decided not to accept direct tuition from his Creator and foolishly lost the relationship. Secondly, I think that it is necessary to show that service is not just about following someone, about merely imitating them. Jesus is not just about being a good example and that all you have to do is copy Him. If we think that, we have missed a fundamental point which is, that mankind needs rescuing before it can serve. It needs rescuing from sin. *Heb 9:14 How much more shall **the blood of Christ**, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, **purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God**?* It must be made clear just how great that separation from God was, how deep sin ran in men's veins and how great a price must be paid to redeem them. In a sense, the OT is a history of the progress of sin. It is a history of the failure to worship in spirit and in truth without sin being dealt with. While the guilt of sin and a conscience of sin remained there could be no true service. We had to move from “dead works to serve the living God”.

Like children we were led through law as by a schoolteacher to bring us to Christ. I DO however believe that Christ was with those people in the Older testament. I believe that Christ spoke through them as He did in Psalms and Prophecy, by the Spirit of God. I also believe that Christ exhibited Himself in people through their character. In people such as Joseph, Moses and David, for example. That character was not fully manifest in men because Christ had not fully empowered His people. The prophet Zechariah looks towards that day, *Zec 12:8 In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them.* When is it? Look at the context in Zechariah, *Zec 12:10 And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, **the spirit of grace and of supplications**: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.* It begins at the crucifixion, *Joh 19:36 For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. Joh 19:37 And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.* John confirms Zechariah.

Jesus as we have said before was in the shadows of the OT. (See Typology). He was hidden in the emblems of service and worship and in many of the lives of His people but not fully revealed. Jesus stands as it were, behind these things, overshadowing them. Behind Him the brightness of the glory of God shines but is eclipsed at this stage. Jesus obscures that brightness of God, such that it casts Him as a shadow upon the OT. We cannot fully discern Him then but He is there. That shadow is cast until that glory of God behind him moves in front of Him to reveal Him fully. *Joh 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.* The voice from heaven announced the beloved and revealed His delight in Him.

There were those in the OT who walked in and beneath that shadow, seeing Christ albeit imperfectly but seeing Him none the less and there were those who did not walk in that shadow. *Psa 91:1 He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.* When He casts His shadow over the Nation of Israel it is as the true Israel, delineating, outlining what they should be. You see, Israel was really a person. The seed, Christ Himself. It is as if Christ, standing before God converses with His Father and the echoes of those conversations drop down behind Him into the shadows on earth. Let me explain. What we see as prophecies given to a nation called Israel are often, in effect the conversation of the Father with the Son. **Conversations between God.** We are eavesdropping on the heavenly discussions. An example of this would be Psalm 110, explained by Jesus.

*Mat 22:41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Mat 22:42 Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. Mat 22:43 He saith unto them, How then doth **David in spirit** call him Lord, saying, Mat 22:44 The LORD (**Jehovah**) said unto my Lord (**Adon**), Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? Mat 22:45 If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?* This is not an argument against the Messiah/Christ being a descendent of David. Clearly Jesus is of the lineage of the house of David. The question being asked is "Whose son is the Messiah?" It's a loaded question. The argument is that Christ is more than a man, He is the Divine Adonai. *Exo 34:23 Three times in the year every male of yours shall be seen before the face of the Adoni Jehovah, Elohi Israel* (my translation). In Psalm 110, is David "in spirit"

listening to the conversation between the Creator, Jehovah and His son Adoni (the Lord), The Messiah? **Conversations between God.** It makes Jesus more than a lineal descendent of David, it shows Him as God.

This conversation is also of interest, *Isa 49:3 And said unto me, Thou art **my servant, O Israel**, in whom I will be glorified. Isa 49:4 Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God. Isa 49:5 And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength. Isa 49:6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee **for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.*** Israel is not here the natural nation. The Israel in whom God will be glorified is the Christ, "the light of the gentiles". Isaiah in the spirit is recording a conversation between Jehovah and the Redeemer. **Conversations between God.**

This servant Israel is Jesus, *Isa 53:3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Isa 53:4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted..... Isa 53:11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.* None of this can apply to national Israel it can only apply to the Messiah.

Jesus is how Israel should have been but never was. Jesus is the perfect servant, the perfect leader, the perfect King, the perfect Priest, the perfect Israel. Every attempt by fallen man to be these fails, even though they aspired to imitate them. National Israel is a poor imitation of the true Israel.

Jesus, the Israel of God, has His Exodus too. *Mat 2:15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.* It establishes that Christ follows the path of Israel. As He begins the great Exodus from Jerusalem, *Luk 9:30 And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Luk 9:31 Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease (lit. EXODUS) which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.* Note also that Christ was not offered at the Jerusalem Temple and that his priesthood is not earthly, *Heb 8:4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:* The earthly things pass away and their service transfers to the heavenlies and this is very important. When OUR Israel Jesus makes this Exodus, He takes us with Him and IN HIM. By that I mean that all the redeemed are encompassed in the person and work of Christ. Outside of that, there is no longer any relationship.

This association with Jesus is shown in so many ways. I will look at some of the associations that are defined by two prepositions. In (ἐν) and together (σύν). You will find "in Christ" used many times, so many that I will only look at those in Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

*Eph 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful **in Christ** Jesus: Eph 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places **in Christ**: Eph 1:10 That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things **in Christ**, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: Eph 1:12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first*

trusted **in Christ**. Eph 1:20 Which he wrought **in Christ**, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Eph 2:6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places **in Christ** Jesus: Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created **in Christ** Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. Eph 2:13 But now **in Christ** Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. Eph 3:6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise **in Christ** by the gospel: Eph 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed **in Christ** Jesus our Lord:

Rom 6:8 Now if we be dead **with Christ**, we believe that we shall also live with him: Rom 8:17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs **with Christ**; if so be that we suffer **with him**, that we may be also glorified together. Eph 2:5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together **with Christ**, (by grace ye are saved;) Col 3:1 If ye then be risen **with Christ**, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Col 3:3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid **with Christ** in God.

These and many more scriptures make it abundantly clear that the relationship with Christ is intimate. Christ is not a distant object of faith, not a one off deed by which we get life. Christ is an ongoing relationship, born witness to by those things that accompany being “in Christ” and “with Christ”. That new life can only exist and be nurtured “IN” and “WITH” Christ and if it is not being nurtured and developed “IN” and “WITH” Christ, it does not exist. It is a figment of the imagination and the person must go back to the cross and find Christ in truth.

We become part of “Israel”, that is part of the chosen people, as an act of God’s kindness, Rom 11:6 *If they were chosen by God's kindness, they weren't chosen because of anything they did. Otherwise, God's kindness wouldn't be kindness.* GW. We are not part of an earthly nation but part of a heavenly nation, the Israel of God. The relationship with Christ puts us in Israel. It is not dissimilar to those who were saved judgement being put in the Ark (a type of Christ). Life is in Christ Joh 11:26 *And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?* If you live IN Christ and believe IN Christ, you have life. It is not just “if you believe in me”, you have to live “in me”. Do you believe that? If you do, then you “are in the heavenlies IN Christ”. I will suggest that living in Christ is living in Israel.

I can only conclude that if men will look to see Israel on this Earth, it will be seen through the lives of those Children of Israel, the Son’s of God, the followers of Christ. It is through those who exhibit the character of Christ that we will see the true Israel of God. Gal 6:15 *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision has any strength nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.* Gal 6:16 *And as many as shall walk by this rule, **peace and mercy be on them and on the Israel of God.***

Now those verses make it quite clear that Israel still exists but not in its old form. It is not in need of some future restoration because it is blessed with “Peace and Mercy”. It continues to be blessed but it is blessed in Christ.

In a like manner as the ancient people Israel were delivered from the bondage of Egyptian servitude, the believers are delivered from the bondage of the Law and its association with the earthly Jerusalem. Gal 4:22 *Scripture says that Abraham had two sons, one by a woman who was a slave and the other by a free woman.* Gal 4:23 *Now, the son of the slave woman was conceived in a natural way, but the son of the free woman was conceived through a promise made to Abraham.* Gal

4:24 *I'm going to use these historical events as an illustration. The women illustrate two arrangements. The one woman, Hagar, is the arrangement made on Mount Sinai. Her children are born into slavery. Gal 4:25 Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia. She is like Jerusalem today because she and her children are slaves. Gal 4:26 But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother.* GW. The Israel of God, in Christ is delivered from legal bondage into the promised land of heaven. That is another story.

## **Chap 15. Definitions – Anti-Semitism and reprisal against Jews**

What should our attitude be to ancient Israel and the Jews? It is abundantly clear from the NT that despite the fact that Jews had been instrumental in the death of Christ, none the less, they were also instrumental in the propagation of the Gospel to the Gentiles. Paul has no shame in his natural ancestry but as he says, *Php 3:7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.* He certainly does not become a Jew hater, despite the persecution he endures from the unbelieving Jews. We shall look at Paul's attitude to Israel and the Jews in a moment but firstly a brief look at the attitude adopted by many in Christendom towards this ancient people. Anti-Semitism is an attitude of hatred towards the Jewish people, the descendents of Shem, the Semites.

In 1190, the Third Crusade began. England showed support for the Crusades where the Jews were killed for supposedly murdering Jesus. Although Jesus forgave His murderers, many of his so called disciples found it impossible. Pogroms took place against Jews all over England. The Jews of London were killed on the day of the King's coronation. In York, the Jews of the city took refuge in a castle, but with no hope of survival after three days' fighting, all five hundred of the Jews chose to commit suicide rather than be butchered by their attackers.

Pope Innocent III and the Fourth Lateran Council, in 1215, said; "In several provinces, a difference in vestment distinguishes the Jews from the Christians; but in others, the confusion has reached such proportions that a difference can no longer be perceived. Hence, at times it has occurred that Christians have had sexual intercourse in error with Jewish women and Jews with Christian women. The crime of such a sinful mixture shall no longer find evasion or cover under the pretext of error, we order that the Jews of both sexes, in all Christian lands and at all times, shall be publicly differentiated from the rest of the population by the quality of their garment."

In 1215, the Pope decreed that hence-forth, all Jews were to display prominently on their breasts, the Yellow Badge of Shame. In 1217, France ordered the Jews should wear a "wheel" on their outer garment but shortly afterward the order was rescinded. However, in 1219 King Philip Augustus ordered the Jews to wear the badge, apparently in the same form. The circular badge was normally to be worn on the breast; some regulations also required that a second sign should be worn on the back. At times, the "sign" was placed on the bonnet or at the level of the belt. The badge was yellow in colour, or of two shades, white and red.

Numerous church councils, 1227-1254, reiterated the instructions for wearing the badge, and a general edict for the whole of France was issued by Louis IX (Saint Louis) on June 19, 1269. The Christian councils later endorsed this edict in 1284. In 1221–1222, the Emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen ordered all the Jews of Sicily to wear a distinguishing badge of bluish colour in the

shape of the Greek letter “t” and also to grow beards in order to be more easily distinguishable from non-Jews.

Wearing the “Badge” was compulsory from the age of seven. This was “so that those who were thus marked would be recognized from every side.” With some variations, the wearing of the “Yellow Badge” was enforced in Hungary, Poland, Germany and in other countries of Europe. There were some places where the rulers and princes of the Church were filled with an even greater ardour to put the mark of Cain on the Jews. For example, in addition to the “Yellow Badge,” the Diocesan Council in 1229 ordered Jews to wear the “Jedenhut” hat, shaped like a cone dunce cap (later to be known as the “Jew Hat”).

Henry III, in his second year as king of England (1218) ordered all Jews to wear a "badge of shame," consisting of a cloth patch in the shape of the two tablets bearing the Ten Commandments, to identify themselves to others. England was the first country in Europe to adopt the practice, but hardly the last. Henry also exacted tallages, or taxes on the Jews to finance his military campaigns. On July 18, 1290, Edward I decreed the Edict of Expulsion, driving all 2,000 of the Jews then living in England to France, from which they had to make their way to anyplace that would accept them (principally Poland and Muslim-controlled parts of Spain). There would be no more Jews permanently living in England until 1656, when Oliver Cromwell lifted the edict to allow a small colony of Sephardic Jewish refugees to live in London. The official year of acceptance, however, would probably be 1858, when Jews were allowed to sit in Parliament without having to convert (as Benjamin Disraeli had previously done not only to become a Conservative MP, but prime minister).

To finance his war to conquer Wales, Edward 1<sup>st</sup> taxed the Jewish moneylenders. When the Jews could no longer pay, they were accused of disloyalty. Edward decreed that the Jews were a threat to the country. All Jews were made to wear a yellow patch in the shape of a star, an idea Adolf Hitler would adopt 650 years later. Over three hundred Jews were taken to the Tower of London and executed, while others were murdered in their homes. Finally in 1290, the King banished all Jews from the country.

*It is sad and shameful to relate that despite the fact that we “Christians” are also Jews, because we now have our citizenship with Israel (The Israel of God is not a separate entity from us as we have seen), that anti Semitism arose in the Churches. Here is what Martin Luther wrote:*

“I shall give you my sincere advice: First to **set fire to their synagogues** or schools and to bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn, so that no man will ever again see a stone or cinder of them. This is to be done in honour of our Lord and of Christendom, so that God might see that we are Christians, and do not condone or knowingly tolerate such public lying, cursing, and blaspheming of his Son and of his Christians. For whatever we tolerated in the past unknowingly - and I myself was unaware of it - will be pardoned by God. But if we, now that we are informed, were to protect and shield such a house for the Jews, existing right before our very nose, in which they lie about, blaspheme, curse, vilify, and defame Christ and us (as was heard above), it would be the same as if we were doing all this and even worse ourselves, as we very well know.

Second, I advise that their houses also be razed and destroyed. For they pursue in them the same aims as in their synagogues. Instead they might be lodged under a roof or in a

barn, like the gypsies. This will bring home to them that they are not masters in our country, as they boast, but that they are living in exile and in captivity, as they incessantly wail and lament about us before God.

Third, I advise that all their prayer books and Talmudic writings, in which such idolatry, lies, cursing and blasphemy are taught, be taken from them. (remainder omitted)"

Martin Luther had a lot in common with Adolph Hitler when it came to his attitude towards the Jews. Julius Streicher<sup>14</sup>, an architect of the Nazi propaganda machine, was presented with a copy of Luther's book, *On the Jews and Their Lies*, in 1937 by the city of Nuremberg. Luther would doubtless have supported Kristallnacht (the night of the broken glass) when, on the 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> November 1938, the Nazis set fire to the synagogues.

The Nazis exploited a variety of anti-Semitic myths, many of which had been entrenched in European culture for generations. They promoted the idea of a 'master race', claiming that Germany should be a nation of pure-blooded 'Aryans', uncontaminated by the influence of inferior peoples such as Jews. At the time of Hitler's rise to power, Germany was experiencing great economic hardship, and Hitler used the Jews as a scapegoat, blaming them for the collapse of German society. This is one of the reasons the Nazis found so many willing adherents to the Nazi cause against the Jews. In 1937, the Christian church seemed to do relatively little to defend the Jews, apart from those who converted to Christianity. The Pope at the time denounced the Nazi's ideas of racial purity, but did not condemn the anti-Jewish decrees implemented by the Nazis. Even today as we write, anti-Semitism has reared its ugly head again in Europe, especially France.

Perhaps Cromwell did most to rehabilitate the Jews based upon his understanding of their role in the Gospel. The Whitehall Conference was a gathering of prominent English merchants, clergymen, and lawyers convened by Oliver Cromwell for the purpose of debating whether Jews should be readmitted to England. The conference lasted from 4<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> December 1655.

The first question which arose for consideration was whether there existed any law forbidding the readmission of the Jews, and this was settled by the decision that the expulsion of 1290 had never been valid. When the terms of admission were discussed, a distinctly hostile spirit manifested itself, and the mercantile interests and the clergy united in opposition. Protesting that he had no obligations to the Jews beyond those imposed by the Scriptures, he insisted that, "since there was a promise of their conversion, means must be used to that end, which was the preaching of the Gospel, and that could not be done unless they were admitted where the Gospel was preached." Then, turning to the objecting merchants, he said: "You say that they are the meanest and most despised of all people. But in that case what becomes of your fears? Can you really be afraid that this contemptible and despised people should be able to prevail in trade and credit over the merchants of England, the noblest and most esteemed merchants of the whole world?" The conference was cowed, and dissolved without a word of protest.

It is sad to reflect that Christianity has been the most antagonistic towards Jews and laid the foundations of hatred and anti-Semitism. So what was the attitude that Paul tried to encourage towards the Jewish people in the early Church? I had not set out to do the following exposition from

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<sup>14</sup> Der Stürmer "the Attacker" was a weekly tabloid-format Nazi newspaper.

Paul's letter to the Romans, but I think that it becomes necessary because it is often used to support a future restoration of National Israel. I want to show, to the contrary, that it more properly defines the attitude that we should have to Judaism. Further that it says nothing about a future revival of National Israel.

The Epistle to the Romans is generally "mined" for individual doctrinal points rather than viewed as a single letter. John Chrysostom (Golden mouth) said "I keep hearing the Epistles of the blessed Paul read, and that twice every week, and often three or four times.....gladly do I enjoy the spiritual trumpet, and get roused and warmed with desire at recognizing the voice so dear to me, and seem to fancy him all but present to my sight, and behold him conversing with me." I don't imagine that many people today keep letters. I must be unusual as I keep correspondence and it goes back 50 years. Just imagine if someone got Paul's letter to the Romans, skimmed through it and threw it in the bin like most letters. What a loss! Yet I am quite sure that Churches today do this through neglect and if it were left to them the Bible would consist of John 3 v 16 and the Nativity!

Romans is a single volume of Christian theology, a compendium of Salvation, a map of Redemption and the great works of Christ. It embraces the major teachings of the Christian Church, Salvation in Jesus, Sin and death, the Law and Righteousness Justification by Faith, Life in the Spirit, the absolute Sovereignty of God, the judgement of the godless and our relationship as Gentiles to the Jews. I have no intention at this time of going through the whole book but will confine our observations to chapters 9, 10 and 11. It shows Paul's attitude to his nation and how we as a consequence should also view them.

Paul begins this section, *Rom 9:1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, Rom 9:2 That I have great **heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.** Rom 9:3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Rom 9:4 Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;* There can be little doubt that Paul has a deep love for his Jewish roots. He has a love which has not been diminished by the treatment that he has received from them. Writing to the Corinthians around the same time as the Letter to the Romans, he says, *2Co 11:24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.* His treatment at the hands of the Jews did not bring hatred for them. He is not anti-Semitic.

Paul does not despise his roots because it was from these roots that our Saviour came. *Rom 9:5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.* It seems to slip people's minds that Jesus was a Jew, the king of the Jews. Why is it that Jesus is so often portrayed as a blond Aryan? Is that not an act of anti-Semitism in itself? Those people whose lives we use to illustrate our weekly sermons, those examples that we use to encourage the faith, those sacred Psalms we hold so dear, were all Jewish. Our Christianity is steeped in the ancient Jewish culture and it is at the root of our faith. We are part of it and we received the Gospel in the early Church from these Jews who had committed their lives to Jesus the Jew. We should not for a moment despise that background because there were some wicked, unbelieving Jews who opposed the Kingdom and the Gospel. Paul does not sever his links with the past and make a scapegoat of the Jewish people for the death of Christ. He does not encourage



“payback”. No, he loves them and he wants to encourage us gentiles to love them and to take the Gospel we have received back to them (Cromwell’s attitude).

Paul sees beyond the mere, yet valuable, externals of the faith, the covenants, the law, the services and so on. He recognises that Israel is not a singular entity. *Rom 9:6 Notwithstanding it can not be that the worde of God should take none effect: for all they are not Israel, which are of Israel: Geneva.* The word Israel is only used in these three chapters of Romans (9 to 11) and without any warning Paul throws this enigmatic statement at his readers that **“they are not Israel which are of Israel”**. What would they understand it? It is unlikely that any Jews were in Rome when Paul writes this letter (circa AD57). Claudius had thrown them out around AD50. *Act 18:2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them.*

It is almost as if Paul expects the Roman gentile believers to know what he is talking about. To make sure, he starts to give us an explanation. In order to distinguish between “Israel” and “not Israel” he starts with Abraham. *Rom 9:7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. Rom 9:8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.* There is a syllogism here, a logical argument that applies deductive reasoning to arrive at a conclusion based on two or more propositions that are asserted or assumed to be true. Abraham has a child of promise, not all children of promise are “seed”, therefore, **“not all Israel are Israel”**. *Rom 9:8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.*

We might also explain this by saying, Israel came out of Abraham’s loins and is one of his descendents. God gave a promise to Abraham’s seed but that was not to all of his children, not to all of his descendents because it passed through Isaac not Ishmael. While we may have expected that both Abraham’s children would get the blessing, the reality was that only one did and that was Isaac. In the event it was not an equal sharing of the blessings that would come to Israel. No, because of the Divine selection we are shown that **“not all Israel are Israel”**.

Again, to make the point, Paul gives us another example from history. *Rom 9:10 And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; Rom 9:11 (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) Rom 9:12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. Rom 9:13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.* The argument is thus, Isaac has two children, God only loves one, therefore, **“not all Israel are Israel”**.

While this is a great and solemn truth, it raises questions about the justice of God, the fairness of God, the impartiality of God. It is a stumbling block for many Christians. Surely it is not fair that God makes decisions about our future before we have a chance to influence that future? We shall examine that further next time as we conclude Paul’s observations about Jews and the attitude that he encouraged towards them in the early Church.

## Chap 16. Definitions – Anti-Semitism and national restoration

Dispensationalism is an idea that there is a future for ethnic Jews in a Jewish nation restored to favour with God and that the Church now is somehow separate from this, at this time. I wondered whether Dispensationalism has been developed to counter anti-Semitism, since it is a teaching of relatively recent origin. We have seen that historically, the protestant lands have been among the greatest persecutors of the Jews, “Christians” who should have known better and that is why we are looking in detail at the Apostle Paul’s attitude to the natural or ethnic Jews. Let us remind ourselves that we have arrived at this point because we have been studying the development of the Nation of Israel and its relationship to the Kingdom of God in Christ. We also consider whether there is any NT Biblical hope of a restored National Israel.

We continue to look at the words of Paul and his statement that “not all Israel are Israel”. If as we read previously, “not all Israel are Israel” and God chooses some and discards others, the “not Israel” seem to have had a raw deal. There is some form of Divine discrimination at work, a discrimination that overrides human ability and will. Have they been deliberately cast aside in favour of the other “Israel”? There has been some favouritism at work surely? Absolutely not. Fairness doesn’t come into it. It is not a question of human desire, human effort, it is an act of Divine mercy, to which we have no right, by definition. *Rom 9:15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. Rom 9:16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.* There is only One who can say “I did it my way”.

Paul gives us an example from scripture. *Rom 9:17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Rom 9:18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Rom 9:19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?* Yes, it is a set up and we have no need to defend our Creator and make excuses for His actions. Pharaoh, like Judas Iscariot was a servant to the eternal purpose of God in Christ Jesus. To say that God does not behave in such a seemingly cruel fashion is to deny what we have clearly placed before us.

Our Sovereign God, who casts out demons with a word, walks on water, makes blind eyes to see, raises men from the dead, Immortal, Invisible God only wise, is capable of making ALL men believe. With a word, He can remove all enmity from the world and make it live at peace. He can bring forward the day of judgement and cast out into Hell the devil and his angels and every cause of evil, this very instant. Yet He does not and that Brethren is where we have to kneel down and accept Him as He is.

The fact that we mortals cannot resist the power of the Creator of the Universe, that we are swept along in the torrent of Divine Sovereignty, out of our own control does not give us the right to shout “unfair”. Raging against the Creator, “If it was all beyond my control why find fault with me? It is not right that I find myself in this situation because you put me here”. ***For who hath resisted his will?*** Well, that my friend is the way it is. That is what it means to be a creature, made out of the dust of the ground, one lump of clay to honour another to dishonour. Who are we to dare to question that? *Rom 9:20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him*

*that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?* End of discussion! Our lives are lived in greater peace if we willingly cast ourselves into those hands that control the Universe and stop fighting against the purpose of God. We need to say with Jesus, *Luk 23:46 Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit:* Only then are we truly safe.

There is another side to this argument however and Paul now reveals it. *Rom 9:22 What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: Rom 9:23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Rom 9:24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?* The upside is that there are those who are called to glory, both Jews and Gentiles. Those who were beyond the covenant, the Gentiles, that is us, who are by the mercy of God brought into a relationship with Christ.

*Rom 9:25 As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. Rom 9:26 And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; **there shall they be called the children of the living God.** Rom 9:27 Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: Rom 9:28 For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. Rom 9:29 And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.*

Again, look at what he says. It is not everyone in Israel that gets saved. ***“Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved”***. We are back to that opening statement of the Apostle, ***“not all Israel are Israel”***. There is only a “remnant”, “leftovers”, a rump, a remainder. Just what does that mean, how big or small is a remnant? Well we would have been like Sodom and Gomorrah without the remnant, so that means we would have been wiped out. We get a better answer further on. *Rom 11:4 But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself **seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.** Rom 11:5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.* A remnant is not a very large proportion of a population. ***“Not all Israel are Israel”***. We are taken back to the days of Elijah and the wicked king Ahab and his murderous wife Jezebel, a nation riddled with apostasy to be reminded that only a few had held the faith and that the rest of the nation were rotten (see Ch 11). ***“Not all Israel are Israel”***.

We now start to focus on Paul’s attitude to Israel, both the un-elect Israel and the remnant Israel. *Rom 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.* Obviously he is talking about the unsaved Israel because he would like them saved. Let us remind ourselves that at the time he is writing, the Gospel of Christ is exploding in the Jewish communities around the world. Obviously, Jews are being saved, some of Israel are being saved. That said, Paul even understanding the absolute Sovereignty of God, still desires and prays for Israel to be saved. Yes, we can understand God saves who He will and yet still pray for people to be saved.

The problem that the Jews had, according to the Apostle was that they were self-righteous. *Rom 10:3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. Rom 10:4 For Christ is*

the end (τέλος telos) of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. That righteousness is found only in Christ not in human endeavour. Now I have never been happy with that translation because it has been used to say that “the law has ended”, or that “Christ makes the law no longer necessary”, or “if you believe you don’t need the law”, all of which are wrong.

Let us look at Paul’s use of the word “end” (τέλος = telos) in Romans. *Rom 6:21 What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end (τέλος = telos) of those things is death. Rom 6:22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end (τέλος = telos) everlasting life.* The term “end” may be considered as the goal, completion or terminus. When whatever has to be done, has been done, you arrive at the completion. So when we say Christ is the “end” of the law, we are saying that when the law has done its work, we arrive at Christ. This is said elsewhere, *Gal 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.* The law has brought us to Christ. Another example is, *Rom 7:9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.* The law convicted of sin. *Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.* Christ delivers us from that sin brought to life by the law. The law has brought us to Christ.

It is a great shame that we have chapter divisions because we should read straight into chapter 11. Paul concludes chapter 10, *Rom 10:20 But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. Rom 10:21 But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people. Rom 11:1 I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. Rom 11:2 **God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.***

The elect of Israel, those God foreknew, are not cast away. *Rom 8:29 **For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Rom 8:30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, **them he also glorified.*****

The consequence of this is that, *Rom 11:12 Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? What does this idea of fullness mean? I think that the Weymouth translation gives the idea, Rom 11:12 and if their lapse is the enriching of the world, and their overthrow the enriching of the Gentiles, will not still greater good follow their restoration?* It is a note of optimism. Gentiles should not be looking at the Jews and despising them. *Rom 11:19 Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Rom 11:20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:* We Gentiles have been grafted in to that historic olive tree and God can graft Jews back in if they repent. The door is not closed. Paul certainly does not engender an anti-Semitic attitude, rather he fosters sympathy for the Jews.

Now I draw this to a close with two further thoughts.

1. Does this passage imply a future national restoration of Israel?

2. To what extent can we apply the ideas Paul lays before us to subsequent generations of Israelites?

**National Restoration.** As far as any National restoration of Israel goes, Paul is silent. He does not teach a future ingathering of all of the Jewish people. He does not talk of a political resettlement in Palestine. He does not talk about future mass salvation of Israel. He shows that just as Jews were “broken” off, they can be grafted back in. Paul never stated that ALL of the branches were broken off and that ALL of the branches would be grafted back in. Such an idea would challenge the teaching of only a “remnant” being saved. *Rom 11:25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. Rom 11:26 And so (οὕτως) all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:* Paul uses a **demonstrative pronoun**, “and so”, or “in this fashion” all Israel shall be saved. He is not saying “then” at that time, the whole nation of natural Israel is saved. He is showing, demonstrating, that thus, here is how it happens, that “ALL Israel”, that includes you and I, are saved.

We are in a time when Gentiles are being gathered into the Historic family of Israel. While it was true that **“not all Israel are of Israel”**, in the sense that not everyone in the Older Testament nation was an elect Israelite, ones of God’s chosen, it is also true that there are Israelites who were not of the tribes of Israel. **“not all Israel are of Israel”**. There are non-Jewish people, not born of Israel who are grafted in and become Israelites as Paul says, *Rom 11:25 Brothers and sisters, I want you to understand this mystery so that you won't become arrogant. The minds of some Israelites have become closed until all of God's non-Jewish people are included. Rom 11:26 In this way Israel as a whole will be saved, as Scripture says, "The Saviour will come from Zion. He will remove godlessness from Jacob.* GW.

**What of Jews beyond Paul’s day?** Yet here is a question. When Paul speaks of the “Remnant” is he talking about a perpetual remnant? That a remnant that will exist in the second century, the third century, our century, some future century or is he only talking about his own day and it is limited to that? He says, *Rom 11:5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.* Better translated, “in the now time” = ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ. If Paul talks about a “remnant”, what then is the “whole” of Israel? He is speaking in Romans chapter 11 of natural Israel, of the natural Jews. We must then conclude that the remnant is the elect of the natural Israel in his day. As he speaks “in the now time”, Paul is speaking about the remnant, the natural Jews who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ in his day. What happens next? What happens when the natural Jews of his day die? Can we say that the following generation will have a remnant?

There is a big change happening when Paul writes. Within ten years, the fabric of the Temple and old Judaism would be destroyed. I would use the analogy that it is like the change of a nation’s status. For example when a country that has been under a colonial rule gets its independence, its citizens have different rights from its mother country. When Christ declared the Kingdom of God, it was open to Jews and Gentiles but those who decided to keep their original loyalties, lost rights to the new Kingdom. The old passport is no longer valid. The old Israel, Judaism and its cultures no longer have any special rights in the new Kingdom. They have no special rights over any other nation at the passport office of the Kingdom of God. They are now no different to any other nation on earth, they just retain traditions and ceremonies that are invalid in the Kingdom. Yet they can be saved.

I no longer see the ancient Jews as having any special rights or claims before God over any other unbelieving people. That said, I do not see that we neglect them or any other unbelievers when it comes to preaching the Gospel. Further, there are absolutely no grounds for negative discrimination against modern Jews or any other nation and anti-Semitism is a sin.

## Chap 17. Definitions - Stephen's rebuke to Israel

We have seen Paul's attitude towards the Jewish remnant of his day and that he does not give any indication of a future mass revival of the hopes of natural or civil Israel. As the fledgling Church grew, its teachings began to undermine Judaism. Conflict was in the air and we are now going to see one of those conflicts brought about by a Hellenistic Jew, a Servant of the Church in Jerusalem called Stephen. His name means "crown" and that he received when he became the first martyr of the early Church. I want to examine Stephen's attitude to natural Israel, as one who is on trial for his life. False witnesses have brought him before the synagogue on charges of blasphemy. How does he view his nation? Here is his response. It is a New Testament response.

**Acts of Apostles CEV chapter 7:1** *The high priest asked Stephen, "Are they telling the truth about you?" 7:2 Stephen answered: Friends, listen to me. Our glorious God appeared to our ancestor Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he had moved to Haran. 7:3 God told him, "Leave your country and your relatives and go to a land that I will show you." 7:4 Then Abraham left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After his father died, Abraham came and settled in this land where you now live. 7:5 God didn't give him any part of it, not even a square foot. But God did promise to give it to him and his family forever, even though Abraham didn't have any children. 7:6 God said that Abraham's descendants would live for a while in a foreign land. There they would be slaves and would be mistreated four hundred years. 7:7 But he also said, "I will punish the nation that makes them slaves. Then later they will come and worship me in this place." 7:8 God said to Abraham, "Every son in each family must be circumcised to show that you have kept your agreement with me." So when Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him. Later, Isaac circumcised his son Jacob, and Jacob circumcised his twelve sons.*

*7:9 These men were our ancestors. **Joseph** was also one of our famous ancestors. **His brothers were jealous of him and sold him as a slave** to be taken to Egypt. But God was with him 7:10 and rescued him from all his troubles. God made him so wise that the Egyptian king Pharaoh thought highly of him. The king even made Joseph governor over Egypt and put him in charge of everything he owned. 7:11 Everywhere in Egypt and Canaan the grain crops failed. There was terrible suffering, and our ancestors could not find enough to eat. 7:12 But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our ancestors there for the first time. 7:13 It was on their second trip that Joseph told his brothers who he was, and Pharaoh learned about Joseph's family. 7:14 Joseph sent for his father and his relatives. In all, there were seventy-five of them. 7:15 His father went to Egypt and died there, just as our ancestors did. 7:16 Later their bodies were taken back to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham had bought from the sons of Hamor.*

*7:17 Finally, the time came for God to do what he had promised Abraham. By then the number of our people in Egypt had greatly increased. 7:18 Another king was ruling Egypt, and he didn't know anything about Joseph. 7:19 He tricked our ancestors and was cruel to them. He even made them*

leave their babies outside, so they would die. 7:20 During this time **Moses** was born. He was a very beautiful child, and for three months his parents took care of him in their home. 7:21 Then when they were forced to leave him outside, the king's daughter found him and raised him as her own son. 7:22 Moses was given the best education in Egypt. He was a strong man and a powerful speaker. 7:23 When Moses was forty years old, he wanted to help the Israelites because they were his own people. 7:24 One day he saw an Egyptian mistreating one of them. **So he rescued the man** and killed the Egyptian. 7:25 Moses thought the rest of his people would realize that God was going to use him to set them free. **But they didn't understand.** 7:26 The next day Moses saw two of his own people fighting, and he tried to make them stop. He said, "Men, you are both Israelites. Why are you so cruel to each other?" 7:27 But the man who had started the fight pushed Moses aside and asked, "Who made you our ruler and judge?" 7:28 Are you going to kill me, just as you killed that Egyptian yesterday?" 7:29 When Moses heard this, he ran away to live in the country of Midian. His two sons were born there.

7:30 Forty years later, an angel appeared to Moses from a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. 7:31 Moses was surprised by what he saw. He went closer to get a better look, and the Lord said, 7:32 "I am the God who was worshiped by your ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." Moses started shaking all over and didn't dare to look at the bush. 7:33 The Lord said to him, "Take off your sandals. The place where you are standing is holy. 7:34 With my own eyes I have seen the suffering of my people in Egypt. I have heard their groans and have come down to rescue them. Now I am sending you back to Egypt." 7:35 This **was the same Moses that the people rejected by saying, "Who made you our leader and judge?"** God's angel had spoken to Moses from the bush. And God had even sent the angel to help Moses rescue the people and be their leader. 7:36 In Egypt and at the Red Sea and in the desert, Moses rescued the people by working miracles and wonders for forty years.

7:37 Moses is the one who told the people of Israel, "God will choose one of your people to be a prophet, just as he chose me." 7:38 Moses brought our people together in the desert, and the angel spoke to him on Mount Sinai. There he was given these life-giving words to pass on to us. 7:39 But our ancestors refused to obey Moses. **They rejected him and wanted to go back to Egypt.** 7:40 The people said to Aaron, "Make some gods to lead us! Moses led us out of Egypt, but we don't know what's happened to him now." 7:41 Then they made an idol in the shape of a calf. They offered sacrifices to the idol and were pleased with what they had done. 7:42 **God turned his back on his people and left them.** Then they worshiped the stars in the sky, just as it says in the Book of the Prophets, "**People of Israel, you didn't offer sacrifices and offerings to me during those forty years in the desert. 7:43 Instead, you carried the tent where the god Molech is worshiped, and you took along the star of your god Rephan.** You made those idols and worshiped them. So now I will have you carried off beyond Babylonia."

7:44 The tent where our ancestors worshiped God was with them in the desert. This was the same tent that God had commanded Moses to make. And it was made like the model that Moses had seen. 7:45 Later it was given to our ancestors, and they took it with them when they went with Joshua. They carried the tent along as they took over the land from those people that God had chased out for them. Our ancestors used this tent until the time of King David. 7:46 He pleased God and asked him if he could build a house of worship for the people of Israel. 7:47 And it was finally King Solomon who built a house for God. 7:48 But the Most High God doesn't live in houses made by humans. It is just as



*the prophet said, when he spoke for the Lord, 7:49 "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? In what place will I rest? 7:50 I have made everything."*

*7:51 You stubborn and hardheaded people! You are always fighting against the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors did. 7:52 **Is there one prophet that your ancestors didn't mistreat?** They killed the prophets who told about the coming of **the One Who Obeys God. And now you have turned against him and killed him.** 7:53 Angels gave you God's Law, but you still don't obey it. 7:54 When the council members heard Stephen's speech, they were angry and furious.*

Stephen is taken to the Jewish council charged with blasphemy, Act 6:13 *And (they) set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: Act 6:14 For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.*

Chapter 7 of Acts is his defence. It is an eloquent and succinct summary of the attitude of the nation of Israel to those who have been its deliverers from the time of Abraham. Stephen's thesis can be summed up in the 51<sup>st</sup> verse, *"You stubborn and hardheaded people! You are always fighting against the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors did."* There is no compromise in his statement, no appeal to a future national deliverance for Israel, no statement that they are God's chosen people, just a litany of the rejection of the deliverers who came to bless them.

They didn't want delivering then and they didn't now because they rejected Christ, Act 7:52 *Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers. **The majority of the nation of Israel never wanted a Saviour.***

Bear this statement of Stephen in mind while I read another statement that is fairly typical of those who believe that Israel will be restored to her former glory in Palestine. Remember that Israel is a term that requires definition. So by Israel today, we mean Zionists, dispersed Jews from Europe, taking up residence in Palestine. I am going to read a statement from The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem which was established in 1980 in recognition of the so called biblical significance of all of Jerusalem, and its unique connection with the Jewish people of Israel.

They claim, "Today it represents millions of Christians, churches and denominations, to the nation and people. We recognize in the restoration of the State of Israel God's faithfulness to keep His ancient covenant with the Jewish people." I do not agree with the thrust of this statement but I am using it to make a point. They say:

"Throughout Scripture, Israel is promised a last-day restoration in the land. This promise rests on the faithful character of God, that He can be trusted to carry out His promises because He cannot lie. This is especially true if it is a covenant promise sworn to by Divine oath. In the Abrahamic Covenant we find the election of both the people and the land of Israel for the purpose of world redemption. The two would merge to become a "great nation" that over time would bless us with all the things we need for salvation (Romans 9:3-5). In the Mosaic Covenant, the relationship between the land and people of Israel is regulated by their spiritual standing before God, in order to show forth His

holy and righteous character. Yet any separation of the people from the land as a Divine corrective measure would always be followed by a return to the land in God's timing (Leviticus 26:40-45; Jeremiah 31:10). In the Davidic Covenant (sic), we are assured that one day the people and land of Israel will be reunited and restored beyond that which King David had built. In fact, it will be an everlasting kingdom presided over by a promised Messiah, the Son of David, who would rule from Jerusalem over all the earth in righteousness and peace.

Finally in the New Covenant, Jesus proved his Messianic credentials through his perfect obedience even while enduring a cruel death on the Cross (Philippians 2:5-11). He earned the right to sit on the throne of David forever to rule over the earth from a restored Israel. He was already equal with God, but now no one can ever challenge His right to rule as Lucifer once did (see Isaiah 14:9-17 sic?). Now some Christians still question whether Israel is promised a restoration in our day. They contend it was either forfeited or already fulfilled in the earlier returns under Ezra and Nehemiah. Or, they say it is not vouched for in the New Testament and therefore Christians can ignore Israel today as a political accident, or as the result of a 'man-made Zionism' devoid of God's hand. Yet by the time the New Testament was written the Israelite hope of restoration was such a prevalent idea that the Jews even minted coins in the First Century expressing their longing "For the Return of Zion" or "For the Redemption of Zion." This hope was largely based on the promises in the Davidic Covenant, beginning with 1 Chronicles 17, that God would establish the throne of David forever and that Israel would one day have eternal rest, in its own land, from all its enemies. And finally, this promised end-time "restoration" of Israel is indeed vouched for in the New Testament, such as in the specific words of Jesus in Matthew 19:28 and in the preaching of Peter in Acts 3:21. In Romans 11, the Apostle Paul further assures us of a future ingathering and acceptance of Israel that ends with all Israel being delivered from their sins.

Now why didn't Stephen mention all that? Why bother to put his life on the line? To the charge, *Act 6:14 For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.* The response of The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem that we have just read, would have been far more conciliatory than Stephen's response. They would have given reasons why the nation of Israel was still favoured of God. **Stephen does not.**

How strange that Stephen fails to assume the obsequious approach of the dispensational commentators, who cannot heap enough glory on the fleshly nation of Israel? He does not hold them in any special regard as if they should be treated differently or more gently as "God's chosen people". He does not appeal to any future glory, or bribe them with future expectations, neither encourage them to think themselves elect and he does not appeal to a better nature in them, **because they are rotten to the core.** No, to the contrary, he states "You ever (ἀεί = aei) oppose (ἀντιπύπτω = antiptō, fall against) the Holy Spirit". They stumbled against the Spirit. It was in their nature to oppose the things of the Spirit and will ever be, because, *1Co 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

Let us look in more detail at the examples Stephen gives to prove his thesis, **that whenever a deliverer appeared, the nation turned against them** and in doing so, because these people were sent by God, they in effect were turning against God. Stephen knows his OT and he just needs a few examples to make his point. He chooses the lives of two persons that even the children in Israel would have known about from their early years. **Joseph** the owner of the multi-coloured coat and **Moses** found in the Bull rushes. It is Divinely inspired, deliciously elegant, beautifully simple and with no appeal to high minded theology or Rabbinic casuistry. Stephen treats these Jews like obdurate children and in fact, any child who has been to a Sunday School can understand the argument Stephen is making.

Firstly, with **Joseph**, he says, 7:9 These men were our ancestors. **Joseph** was also one of our famous ancestors. **His brothers were jealous of him and sold him as a slave** to be taken to Egypt. The “12 tribes” literally turned against Joseph who became “the Saviour of the World”. *Gen 41:45 And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnathpaaneah*; Jerome says this name signified in Egyptian, {Savatorem mundi,} the Saviour of the world; and Psotem-phaneh, in Coptic (Egyptian). You know the story.

Then, there is **Moses**, 7:25 **Moses** thought the rest of his people would realize that God was going to use him to set them free. **But they didn't understand**. Moses too was a deliverer, a Saviour of Israel and they rejected him too. Now Stephen rounds his defence off. He directs them to Jesus who is at the heart of the dispute. 7:52 **Is there one prophet that your ancestors didn't mistreat? They killed the prophets who told about the coming of the One Who Obeys God. And now you have turned against him and killed him**. Yet another Saviour and they rejected Him too.

The Jews never learned the lessons from history. They never willingly followed God's Saviours. Stephen rounds on them and as he does, you can see their twisted faces, red with anger, bitter with hatred, hissing against him as he says, *Act 7:51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Act 7:52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:*

In that moment, Stephen the angel of God, *Act 6:15 And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel*, had signed his own death warrant. Our Lord looks upon the scene from Heaven and stands from His throne as if to applaud, *Act 7:56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God*. It is as if Jesus is welcoming him to sit in His throne, his work on Earth being done and well done!

Now show me where Stephen offered any hope to these Jews other than the Messiah they rejected. There was no other hope in Israel. No second blessing, no second chances, no future restoration, no confirmation that their corrupt system of religion held any sway with God. The moment they had rejected Christ, that was it! It would be the same for the rest of mankind who did not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is the same conflict that Jesus had with these enemies of God, *Mat 21:42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Mat 21:43 Therefore say I unto you, The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the*

**fruits thereof.** *Mat 21:44 And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. Mat 21:45 And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. Mat 21:46 But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.*

Yet as with all God's dealings, there was a purpose in this confrontation. *Act 8:1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time **there was a great persecution against the church** which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.* It starts the next phase of Gospel expansion. Remember how Jesus had said, *Act 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.* What He did not say was how He would do it. It was sparked by persecution.

Here is another reason that Churches did not put up buildings. They were not to get comfortable and complacent in this life. They had no abiding home here. Israel, the Israel of God, will never have a home on this old Earth and with these old Heavens.

Just as a footnote to this ministry and I hope, a practical footnote, a word about how we might best testify of our faith. **One lesson from Stephen is KEEP IT SIMPLE.** It is very easy to get into complex theological arguments that go nowhere. Stephen has a point to make and makes it well using two of the most famous characters in the Bible, Joseph and Moses.

On Friday of this week (1/5/15) two Jehovah's Witness ladies knocked on my door and gave me a tract about the Bible. I asked them a simple question. "Are you born again?" to which they honestly replied, "No". I asked them to open the Bible that they had encouraged me to look into, at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter of John's Gospel. "Except a man be born again" he can neither see nor enter the Kingdom of God. How I asked, can you tell me anything about something that you know nothing of? How can the man or woman blind from birth, describe the beauty of Creation? How can a person direct you to the door of the Kingdom if they have not passed through it themselves. Neither are possible. They needed Christ and Christ alone, not an organisation full of unbelievers to get them into the Kingdom. That was the challenge I left them with.....and yes, I thanked them for the opportunity to tell them that.

You see, there is no point getting into depths about what people believe until you have got over that barrier because you are talking to unregenerate people and as we know, the natural man does not grasp the things of God. All our testimonies must direct men to Christ, the door of the fold. No man comes to the Father but by Him.

Stephen directs the conclusion of his testimony to Jesus and rounds on the Jews. "Which of the prophets that God sent did you hear and now you have killed Jesus the Messiah" (my paraphrase). One of those standing by this brutal murder was Saul and he was asked the question a few days later, "Why do you persecute me?" He saw Christ and that was the start of a new life.

## Chap 18. Definitions - The Temple

Next we want to try and define the word “Temple”. I also want to answer the question which is on many Christians’ minds and that is, does prophecy say that there will be a rebuilding of a Jewish Temple on earth in the future?

Let us remind ourselves how the Temple developed. Early worship had no permanent “sacred place”. Men offered sacrifice as they were instructed, *Gen 22:2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.* In those days, there were no requirements for a priestly caste to sacrifice on behalf of others and a man could make offerings for his own family, *Job 1:5 And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.*

Formal worship and sacrifice emerges as the nation becomes established after the Exodus. The focal point of the worship is the Tabernacle or Tent of the meeting. In the law, it was a requirement to appear before the Lord three times a year (Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles). There was no such thing as a Sabbath (Sunday) service of worship. People enjoyed the Sabbath as a rest day at home. The Tabernacle worship was a continual service by the priesthood on behalf of the Nation of Israel.

With the establishment of the “sacred place”, the Tabernacle, we note that it is not linked to any permanent geographic location. It is a portable sanctuary and its temporary locations are defined by the movement of the fiery pillar and cloud, *Num 9:15 And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up the cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, the tent of the testimony: and at even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning. Num 9:16 So it was alway: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. Num 9:17 **And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed:** and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents. Num 9:18 At the commandment of the LORD the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the LORD they pitched: as long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle they rested in their tents. Num 9:19 And when the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the LORD, and journeyed not.*

The Tabernacle found a more permanent residence in Shiloh from the time of Joshua to Samuel. Following the apostasy of Israel, the death of Eli and his sons, the loss of the Ark of the covenant to the Philistines, Shiloh becomes extinct. *Psa 78:60 So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men; ..... Jer 7:12 But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel.* What remains of the Tabernacle goes to Nob, then to Gibeon where it disappears.

When the Ark of the Covenant returns, as we have seen, David builds a special Tabernacle or Tent for it and it is separate from the main worship at Nob. David was “a man of blood” and was not allowed to build a house for God, *1Ch 28:6 And he said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts: for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father. 1Ch 28:7 Moreover I*

*will establish his kingdom for ever, if he be constant to do my commandments and my judgments, as at this day.* Not that a house could contain the Creator of the Universe. *1Ki 8:27 But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?* Clearly, it was a concession to Israel. This marks another transition, whereby the “Sacred place” now has a permanent geographic location.

Thus far, we have seen a gradual development of worship and service that follows a Divine pattern. It is part of a progressive revelation where the people of God are drawn closer and closer to their Creator. The model for the Tabernacle was given to Moses based upon a revelation given to him, *Heb 8:5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.* Now if you have studied the Tabernacle and its furnishings, you will find that there is a plethora of excellent books covering every aspect of its purpose and symbolism. It is a cornerstone of many devotionals. When it comes to the Temple, it is as if we have exhausted ourselves and have far less to say on it. In many eyes the Tabernacle is seen as far more glorious than the Temple, perhaps because we know more about it. In my opinion, the Temple is the more perfect type that the Tabernacle as it is part of the progressive revelation of the Kingdom of God. Do not neglect to study the Temple.

The Temple at Jerusalem was also constructed according to a spiritual pattern and this one was given to King David. *1Ch 28:11 Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, 1Ch 28:12 And the pattern (LXX paradigm) of all that he had by the spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things:*

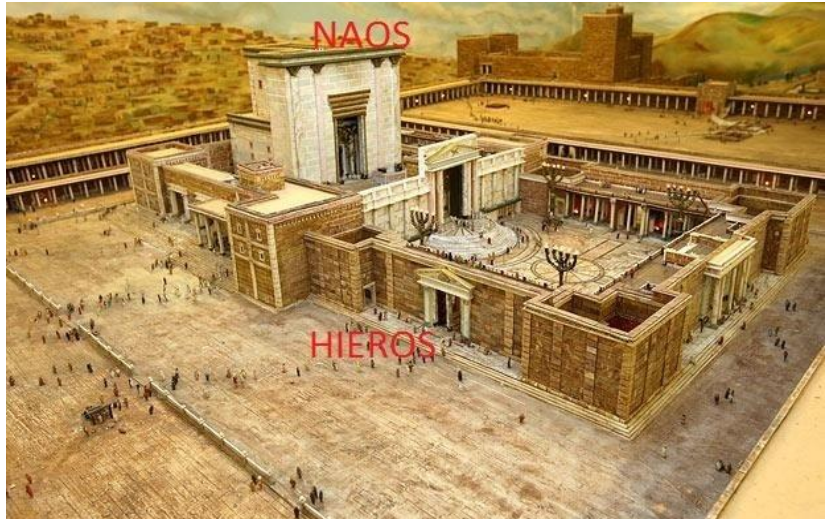
As we know, this “first” Temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and was a monument to national apostasy. Following the exile, the rebuilt “second” Temple was a shadow of Solomon’s and that in turn was replaced by Herod’s Temple at the time of Christ. 70 years after the birth of Christ it was destroyed for the last time.

What did the Lord have in mind and more importantly, what did He have in heaven, that these constructions were based upon? To answer this we turn to John’s Gospel. *Joh 2:18 Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Joh 2:19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Joh 2:20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? Joh 2:21 But he spake of the temple of his body.*

Unfortunately, our English versions fail to distinguish the synonyms for the words translated Temple. Two words are used, ναός naos and ἱερόν hieron. *Luk 19:45 And he went into the temple (ἱερόν), and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought;.... Joh 2:21 But he spake of the temple (ναός) of his body.* What is the difference? The Temple (ἱερόν) refers to the whole enclosure in which service and trade was conducted. The Temple (ναός) refers to the inner part of the ἱερόν known as the Holy place together with the Holy of Holies. *Luk 19:47 And he taught daily in the temple (ἱερόν).. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him,..... Joh 2:14 And found in the temple (ἱερόν) those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting.* Jesus never taught in or entered into the “shrine” or holy place, the ναός,



only into the outer court of the *ἱερόν*. This makes the action of Judas Iscariot even more outrageous, in that he went into the Holy place to throw his blood money back. *Mat 27:5 And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple (ναός), and departed, and went and hanged himself.*



Having established the meaning of these words, we ask those who believe that the Temple will be built again in some future, what “temple” or what part of the temple, are you talking about? At

the time of Jesus, there is no doubt that a temple would be rebuilt, indeed, He says so Himself. *Joh 2:19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple (ναός), and in three days I will raise it up.* It cannot be stated more clearly, however, that He had in mind, NOT the whole outer court, the place of slaughter, washing, sacrifice and burning. No, He had in mind the Holy place, the (ναός) and that was symbolically His body, *Joh 2:21 But he spake of the temple (ναός) of his body.*

Why does He not equate His resurrection with the restoration of the whole Temple, the *ἱερόν* instead of limiting it to the *ναός*? Why doesn’t Jesus say that He will raise the *ἱερόν* and thereby associate His resurrection with the whole structure? We would get an explanation from the letter to the Hebrews, *Heb 10:11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: Heb 10:12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;* The outer part of the Temple and all that it represented was done away with by the singular sacrifice of Christ. There is no need of the *ἱερόν* since the outer court no longer has any function. With no need for sacrifice there is no need for altars and a place to keep them.

Another significant event that occurs when Jesus gives up the Ghost on the Cross is that the veil of Herod’s Temple is torn. *Mar 15:37 And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. Mar 15:38 And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.* Not from bottom to top as if it were man’s doing, but from heaven to earth. What does it signify? *Heb 9:6 Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. Heb 9:7 But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: Heb 9:8 The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Heb 9:9 Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Heb 9:10 Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. Heb 9:11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Heb 9:12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*



The tearing down of the veil coincides with the removal of the old symbolic worship and the opening of the holy place to all believers. *Heb 10:19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, Heb 10:20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; Heb 10:21 And having an high priest over the house of God;* The veil was a type of His flesh and the old Temple veil rips and dies in His death, and the true Temple is raised from the dead.

Those who believe that in some future civil state of Israel, that the whole thing must be re-enacted and the Temple rebuilt and the blood offerings recommence, to those we ask, what did the **“one sacrifice for sins for ever”** really mean? It is a sacred thing and those who rejected it in Jesus’ day did not have a second chance. *Heb 10:28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Heb 10:29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?*

Just as we saw the development of the OT worship with its symbolic representation of the heavenlies, we now see in Jesus, revealed, what was behind those representations and who they were modelled upon. The Temple is Jesus. *Rev 21:22 And I saw no temple (ναός) therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple (ναός) of it. Rev 21:23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* The heavenly city that Moses and David were allowed to see is revealed to us by John in his Apocalypse and finally we understand beyond any doubt, here is the Temple of God. Here we worship in spirit and in truth at the feet of Jesus. *Rev 7:15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.*

One final point of clarification. If Jesus is the Temple, why are believers called the Temple of God as well? *1Co 3:16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? 1Co 3:17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.*

We have elsewhere (Chapter 14) explored the meaning of being “in Christ” and “with Christ”, showing our personal relationship with Him. The scripture also declares His relationship with us, *Col 1:27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:* We might say that we are in Christ and Christ is in us. How can we explain this?

I recall a story told about the evangelist Gypsy Smith. Gypsy Smith (1860-1947) was born in a tent, raised on a Gypsy camp, never attended a school and yet he influenced the lives of millions of people for God through his powerful preaching. He was converted in 1876 aged 16 year and, the next year, was invited by General William Booth to join him in evangelistic work. He served as an officer with the Salvation Army until 1882. A young believer once asked Gypsy Smith, how can we be in Christ and He be in us at the same time? As they were walking along the seashore at the time, the wise evangelist picked up a bottle and filled it full of sea water, replaced the cork and then threw the bottle into the sea. “There you go” he said to the young believer, “the sea is in the bottle and the bottle is in the sea – in the same way Christ is in us and we are in Christ.

A simple analogy but it shows our relationship and explains further how we might be in the Temple and part of the Temple. Peter puts it like this, *1Pe 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, **are built up a spiritual house**, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

## Chap 19. Definitions - Jerusalem

Before I start today's ministry, I want to reiterate two principles of interpretation that we have already stated:

1. The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy (Rev 19:10)
2. First the natural and then the spiritual (1 Cor 15:46)

To which, I would add another principle for prophetic interpretation, "Start with the Obvious and work towards the Obscure". By this I mean, start to develop principles of interpretation from the clear and unambiguous texts of scripture. Text such as Jesus describing his body as the Temple (shrine), the Seed of Abraham being Christ, Israel having a faithful remnant, a Jew as a person whose heart is circumcised, these are the clear statements of scripture. We extrapolate from these.

We now look at the history of Jerusalem. There is a suggestion that the location of the Ancient garden of Eden was not in Persia but was near what became Jerusalem. A far fetched idea, perhaps, but as we shall see, there is certainly a spiritual connection between Eden and the heavenly Jerusalem? Interestingly, there were four rivers that watered Eden. Two survived the Great Flood, Euphrates and Gihon. *Gen 2:13 And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia.* Is this the Gihon that provided water for Jerusalem? *2Ch 32:30 This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works.* We shall come back to this association between Jerusalem and Eden.

Jerusalem is an ancient city. It is associated with the King Priest Melchizedek who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the Kings, at that time it was known as Salem, Peace. It is speculated that Melchizedek is the same person as Shem, Noah's eldest son and this is the view in Rabbinical literature. Shem might have carried the Priesthood exercised by Noah and if this is so, he was still alive at the same time as Abraham. We tend to forget that the great ages of the patriarchs meant that their lives overlapped, such that Adam could have spoken to Methuselah, who died in the year of the flood, a span from Creation to the Flood of two generations. Shem's life spanned 9 generations of his descendents down to Abraham. Christ is a descendent of this Shem.

Abraham is directed to Moriah to sacrifice his "only son" (see Chapter 5). This is considered the same place that the temple would be built generations later and where David would raise his Tabernacle. *2Ch 3:1 Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the LORD appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite.* The foundation of the Temple, the foundation of worship was in a manner of speaking, being laid upon the sacrifice of Christ albeit in a type. *1Co 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

Eventually, Jerusalem becomes the permanent place of worship with the erection of the Temple of Solomon. It becomes the focus of ritual worship, even for those who were scattered abroad. *2Ch 6:38 If they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captives, and pray toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and toward the city which thou hast chosen, **and toward the house** which I have built for thy name: 2Ch 6:39 Then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee.*

In this, it becomes a symbol of the city of God, the place where God dwells with His people and they worship together. It becomes the capital of God's Kingdom on earth and a type of the heavenly city, Jerusalem above. *Psa 122:1 A Song of Ascents. Of David. I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!" Psa 122:2 Our feet have been standing within your gates, **O Jerusalem!** Psa 122:3 Jerusalem—built as a city that is bound firmly together, Psa 122:4 to which the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD. Psa 122:5 There thrones for judgment were set, the thrones of the house of David. Psa 122:6 **Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!** "May they be secure who love you! Psa 122:7 Peace be within your walls and security within your towers!" Psa 122:8 For my brothers and companions' sake I will say, "Peace be within you!" Psa 122:9 For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your good.*

Jerusalem on earth was not an end in itself. It was a shadow of heavenly things and it was in time to be destroyed and left behind. It was the natural that preceded the spiritual. We should not be saddened by this because we look with Abraham to a city whose builder and maker is God. As we have seen, it was destroyed because of the apostasy of Israel, rebuilt twice more before being desolated by the Romans. By that time, however, its population had migrated with Jesus. *Luk 9:31 Appearing in glory, they spoke of His **exodus**, which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem.* LITV. The true believers leave behind the earthly Jerusalem as Jesus leads us to glory everlasting.

This transition is clearly established by Paul who uses an analogy or allegory to describe what has happened. *Gal 4:21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? Gal 4:22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. Gal 4:23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Gal 4:24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. Gal 4:25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to **Jerusalem which now is**, and is in bondage with her children. Gal 4:26 But **Jerusalem which is above** is free, which is the mother of us all.*

We can say that, if you are of the First Covenant, you are under law, you are a child of the slave, you are a child of the flesh, and you are in slavery, children of the earthly Jerusalem. We can equally infer that, if you are the children of the promise, you are children of the New Covenant, the Second Covenant, you are a child of the free woman, you are not in slavery and as children of Sarah, our mother, the one who bears us answers to Jerusalem which is above. We are not children of the earthly Jerusalem, we are children of the heavenly Jerusalem. We are free.

In the epistle to the Hebrews, we come across further confirmation of this. *Heb 12:22 But **ye are come unto mount Sion**, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, Heb 12:23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,*

*Heb 12:24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. That is where we are, **not** where we are going to. It is the same thing as, Col 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: Col 1:14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: and again, Eph 2:5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) Eph 2:6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:*

It is absolutely clear that Jerusalem as a focus of faith, has totally changed from an earthly city to a heavenly city, The City of God. There is not one indication in the NT that an earthly Jerusalem will be reconstructed. In fact, the NEW Jerusalem already exists. *Rev 21: 2 And I John saw the holy city, **new** (καίνος kainos) **Jerusalem**, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.....Rev 21:10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.* William Blake's sentimental hymn, building Jerusalem among the dark satanic Mills of England's "pleasant pastures green" is theological tripe! Faithful Jerusalem is no longer of this world or this life.

As citizens of the New Jerusalem we are identified by our new names. Just as the evil sons of satan are identified by a name and number (666), we have something written upon us. "Jehovah" and "Jerusalem". *Rev 3:12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him **the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God**, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.* There is no doubt where I live or who my parent is.

At the start of this ministry, we suggested a link between the Garden of Eden and Jerusalem. Eden is also associated with Paradise. (פֶּדֶשׁ pardêš παράδεισος paradeisos παράδεισος) The Hebrew word is translated "orchard". *Ecc 2:5 I made me gardens and **orchards** (Heb פֶּדֶשׁ ), and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: Son 4:13 Thy plants are an **orchard** (Heb פֶּדֶשׁ ) of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard.*

The Greek LXX version uses the word "paradise" to describe the garden of Eden. *Gen 2:8 And the LORD God planted a garden (LXX παράδεισος) eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Gen 13:10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden (LXX παράδεισος) of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Isa 51:3 For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden (LXX παράδεισος) , and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.*

There are many scenarios and environments that you could invent, in which to place mankind. Like a Divine pet, man could have been pampered and indulged to every degree. He could have been given powers and tools to have managed the world around him with ease. But God in His wisdom put the man in a garden. *Gen 2:15 The LORD God put the man in the Garden of Eden to work the soil and take care of the garden.* I think that there is something profound in this statement. It tells us

something about the Creator. He is at heart a gardener. There is a delight in the creativity, fruitfulness, beauty and labour of maintaining a garden. A love story with the creation, which more than anything, manifests the wisdom, power, diversity and beauty of God's power.

The romance between Christ and the Church, as it is suggested in Solomon's song, is described with the symbolism of a garden. Some Jewish rabbis down through the ages have recommended that the book not be read by anyone under thirty years of age because of its sexual and erotic symbolism. Well, that may be one way to get people to read their Bible. You judge for yourself. *Son 4:12 A **garden** inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Son 4:13 Thy plants are an orchard (paradise) of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with **spikenard**, Son 4:14 Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices: Son 4:15 A fountain of **gardens**, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon. Son 4:16 Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my **garden**, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his **garden**, and eat his pleasant fruits.*

So should it surprise us that when Mary Magdalene comes to the empty tomb, she mistakes the risen Christ for a gardener? *Joh 20:15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.* Just as the first history of mankind is enacted in a garden, so too, the start of the reign of Christ begins in a garden. The woman out of whom were cast seven devils, perhaps typifying the Bride, the Church, meets her beloved.

When Jesus was dying, he promised a dying sinner Paradise. *Luk 23:43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.* He promises it to all who love Him. *Rev 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of **the paradise** of God.*

There was a forbidden tree of life in the beginning in Eden, *Gen 3:22 And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:* We now arrive at the other end of History where access to the healing tree is given. It has been a tortuous journey to this place. It has been gained at an immense price. Justice has been satisfied all round. Man has been brought to the end of himself. His inability to do any good had been stamped on the record of every man save one. As the hymn writer Newman said, "O loving wisdom of our God! when all was sin and shame, a second Adam to the fight and to the rescue came".

We regain Paradise, we enter Eden, we become citizens of the Heavenly Jerusalem, we eat of the Tree of life at last and we are healed. *Rev 22:2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

One day we will know if earthly Eden really was where the ancient Jerusalem stood. Yet it does not really matter to us, for all that has passed away. All the symbols and types have become their realities. There is no resurrecting of types, no raising of Old Jerusalem in bondage, no rebuilding of ancient Temples, no old land of Israel. Behold, God makes all things new.

*Rev 21:4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. Rev 21:5 And he that sat upon the throne said, **Behold, I make all things new.** And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. Rev 21:6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. Rev 21:7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. Rev 21:8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*

## **Chap 20. Definitions - Day of the Lord, Last days, Latter days.**

We have yet to look at the future predictive elements of prophecy as we continue to do the ground work and understand the wider Biblical terminology. This time we examine the meaning of:

- Latter days
- Day of the Lord
- Last days

I will start by examining the term “latter days”. Its use is confined to some of the OT translations but not the NT. *Dan 2:28 But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be **in the latter days**. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; Hos 3:4 For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: Hos 3:5 Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness **in the latter days**.*

The term “the latter days” is found in the King James Version but is not found in modern translations. It is not always clear whether “the latter days” means a somewhat later period than that of the writer or the very last period of history, the end of the world. It certainly appears to indicate some future point in OT history, not necessarily the end of days or the end of the world, but a time that is future. We need to be careful when interpreting this term.

Some 30 years ago, I engaged in a correspondence with the Lord’s Day Observance Society (LDOS). It was about the origin of the use of “Lord’s Day” for Sunday and how that was also called the Sabbath. The General Secretary held,

“....that the Lord’s Day is the day we remember the Lord’s resurrection and the Scripture clearly teach us that the resurrection took place on the first day of the week – being our Sunday – thus changing from the Jewish Sabbath, which was the Saturday (sic)”.

So here was their argument. The Lord’s Day is a memorial of the resurrection and somehow, the Jewish Sabbath (a Saturday) now becomes a Sunday. This was the problem I had. There was not one scripture advanced to show the Church in the time of the Apostles had a “Lord’s Day”. There was not one scripture advanced to show that the Apostles relocated the Jewish Sabbath from Saturday, to a Christian Sunday (or that its commencement had changed from sunset to midnight).

The only biblical use of "Lord's Day" is in John's Apocalypse. There is no evidence of any kind that "the first day of the week" was ever called "the Lord's Day" before the Apocalypse was written. As someone observed, "It is incredible that the earliest use of a term can have a meaning which only subsequent usage makes intelligible". That is what the LDOS were doing, they were interpreting the meaning of "Lord's Day" not from its use in scripture, but from the meaning it gained by later usage. The cart was pulling the horse.

Not worth bothering about you might say, a waste of time on something that doesn't edify? I do not agree. God says what He means and means what He says. His word is definitive for faith and life. If it was important enough to write, it is important enough for us to understand. So what is the "Lord's day"? The only time that this term is used it is in the Revelation of Jesus, *Rev 1:10 I was in Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet*. Is John saying that he was "in Spirit" on a Sunday or does it mean something else? It adds nothing to our understanding to say that John received this on a Sunday. What would contribute? Does Revelation only happen on a Sunday?

The only comparable term with "The Lord's Day" is "The day of the Lord". *2Pe 3:10 But **the day of the Lord** will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up*. Also *1Th 5:1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. 1Th 5:2 For yourselves know perfectly that **the day of the Lord** so cometh as a thief in the night. 1Th 5:3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape*. Now I am not certain that the terms ("Day of the Lord" and "Lord's day") are exactly the same, although they are in part linked by the fact of judgement. Let me explain. Paul writes to the brothers in Corinth, who it seems have been questioning Paul's stewardship. Paul is more concerned that he is right before God and that his praise is from God than that it comes from man. In short he doesn't care what the Corinthians think of him or how they judge him. He makes this statement.

*1Co 4:3 and to me it is for a very little thing that by you I may be judged, or by **man's day**, but not even myself do I judge, YLT*. In the context of....*1Co 4:5 so, then, nothing before the time judge ye, till the Lord may come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of the darkness, and will manifest the counsels of the hearts, and then the praise shall come to each from God*. Rather than translate the original word as "day" (man's day), some have decided to interpret it as "judgement", as the AV does, *1Co 4:3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of **man's judgment**: yea, I judge not mine own self*.

They incorrectly translate the text as "man's judgement" rather than "man's day". The original word is "day" not "judgement". It definitely loses some of the sense because Paul is saying that it is of little matter to him whether he is judged by the Corinthians or judged by mankind (man's day). This age in which we live is "man's day" and a day under man's judgement. We might then contrast this "man's day" with the day that is the "Lord's day". As "mans day" is associated with the judgements of man, the "Lord's day" is associated with the judgements of God. Not I would suggest, events that occur on just one day but judgements that occur throughout history.

If we look at the structure of Revelation, it is not a linear prophecy. By that I mean, it does not progress through time in a linear fashion from chapter 1, the start, to chapter 22 the end. It is not starting with chapter 1 being 100 AD and progressing to chapter 22 in say 2050 AD. I am suggesting



that the narrative moves between subject groups, the Church, the temporal world, the spiritual world and the Kingdom of God in relationship to these. It is not my purpose here to go into detail about this and that will DV be for a later study. The point that I am making is that John's Apocalypse is an alternative world view on events and Judgement, viewed from God's perspective. It is viewed from the "Lord's Day" or the "Lord's judgement".

I am suggesting that this Apocalypse written by John, is not something that occurs at the end of this age, rather, that it is something that is continually happening. By way of illustration, John starts with the 7 churches, a specific group. Judgement, as Peter observes, starts at the house of God. *1Pe 4:17 For the time is come that **judgment must begin at the house of God**: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? 1Pe 4:18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?* The 7 churches may be a typical cross section of the churches of the age. If they are representative, it suggests that the majority of churches are in bad way. Only 2 out of 7 escape rebuke.

Now here is a thing. In the midst of our happy, clappy, messy, singalong, talk nice, user friendly, non-judgemental churches today, it never occurs to anyone that anything might be wrong with us. Somehow we live in the age of perfect congregations, perfect Churches, all doing what God wants. Yet that is not the view of Christ in John's Apocalypse. The threat is there, that the lights are going to go out, *Rev 2:5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will **remove thy candlestick** out of his place, except thou repent.*

"What?" you say. Surely we are exempt from this if we have believed on Christ? I ask you, is that all Christ asked of you? Just believe on His death but not live in His life? That judgement is working and will work in the Churches and we are blind if we cannot see it. It is happening now, not reserved for a later day. It has been working throughout history. *1Co 11:29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 1Co 11:30 For this cause **many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. 1Co 11:31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. 1Co 11:32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.***

I know we all have an aversion to the idea that God should judge us but that is taught here. It is also taught elsewhere that we are chastised of the Lord. This is because He wants a decent set of people to represent Him, not a bunch of Bible bashing, proof text quoting renegades, like the Pharisees. The Churches need to get it into their mindset that judgement is not just reserved for a latter day, giving them time to get things right at the last minute but that it is now and it is happening. There is a final day of judgement and there is judgement in the NOW. *2Pe 2:9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:* I am suggesting that the "Lords day" is the day of God's judgements and that His judgements occur in time throughout recorded history.

The "last days" are, it appears, also with us. *Act 2:17 And it shall come to pass **in the last (ἐσχάτος eschatos) days**, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:* The Greek word for "last", eschatos, is used in the word "Eschatology", the study of the last things. *Isa 2:2 And it shall come to pass **in the last days**, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall*

*be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. Isa 2:3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

*2Ti 3:1 This know also, that **in the last days** perilous times shall come. 2Ti 3:2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 2Ti 3:3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, 2Ti 3:4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; 2Ti 3:5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*

*2Pe 3:3 Knowing this first, that there shall come **in the last days** scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 2Pe 3:4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.*

We are in the “Last days”, *Heb 1:2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son*, but what does that mean? That we have only a few days before the end of this age? If so, it has been a long few days. I think that we are looking at the final act of God’s purpose in this world. *Heb 9:26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once **in the end of the world** hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.* We live in the days when the Gospel, the good news of Jesus is being preached and when that has been completed to God’s satisfaction, the end will come. *Mat 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and **then shall the end come.***

In the early church, the day of Pentecost was a signpost in the last days. The outpouring of God’s Spirit marked the final push to victory over satan and the advent of the Kingdom of God.

Now what should concern us? I think that sometimes when we look at prophecy, we are like people sitting in a cinema. We are somehow remote from what we are looking at. We are watching a dramatised Bible, a review of History and apocalyptic film and we are at a point where we are waiting to see what will happen. We watch the conclusion of the film but there are many alternative endings as there have been a lot of contributors to the epic movie. What really will happen? We sit there as observers and speculators, like ancient god’s, looking down from the clouds at mortal man’s history.

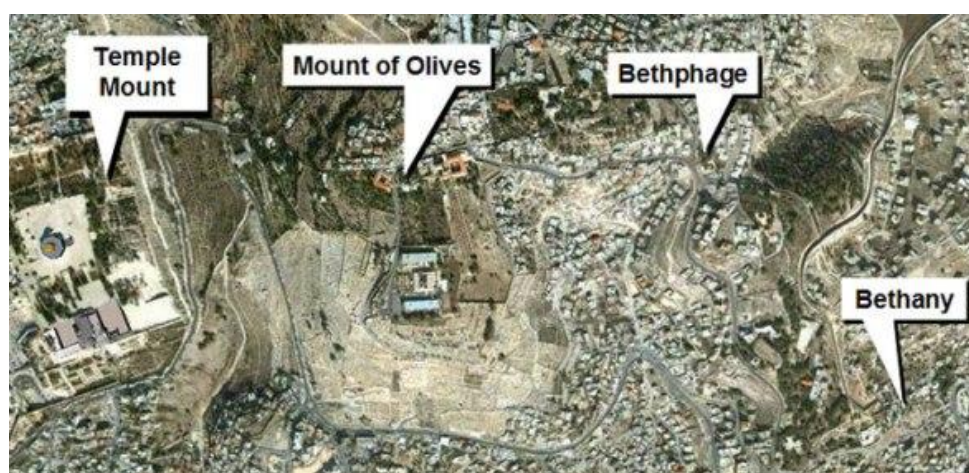
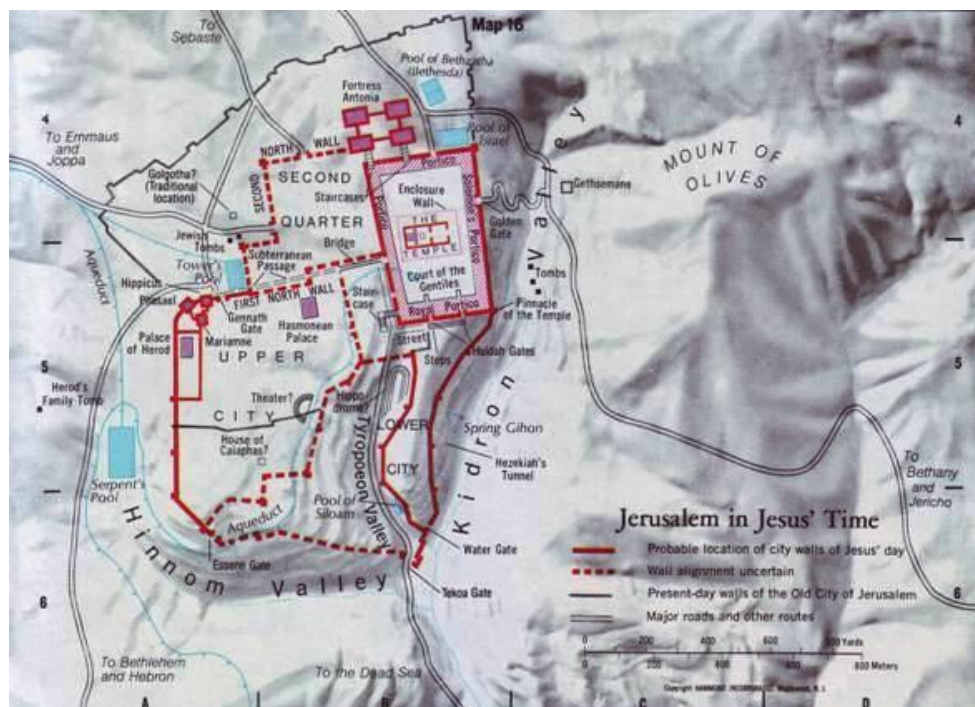
If that is how we view all these events, we have missed a most important point or two. Firstly, we are not just observers, we are in the film. We are part of this unfolding history of the last days. Our lives are tied irrevocably to the pages of Revelation. Just as we have read the lives of Saints now departed, future generations will read about our days and speculate about our faithfulness and commitment. We shall ourselves become history.

The second point I would like to make is this. Whatever will happen, however it all works out in the end, each and every one of us alive today will pass out of history and in all probability, long before the curtain is drawn on this universe. Whatever you believe about the last times, latter days or last days, it will not affect your own mortality. It will neither extend your life nor shorten it. It will not stop the Lord from drawing the life from your body and bringing you before His person on the day He has appointed for you.

What then is important? It is this. It is that you and I are found in our right mind at the feet of Christ. That you and I have not just heard that Jesus forgives but that we know that we are forgiven. That we now have a life and live it with Him. Whatever happens here, that is the most important thing and as for the rest we shall probably observe it coming to pass from the viewpoint of Glory in Heaven.

## Chap 21. The Olivet discourse – 1. The setting

Matthew chapter 24 is also known as “The Olivet discourse” or “The little Apocalypse”. It is given as a response to questions raised by the disciples at the Temple of Herod. The Temple is a short walk from Olivet where the discourse is delivered.



You will find three accounts of Jesus' prophecy:

- Matthew chapter 24 verses 1 to 51
- Mark chapter 13 verses 1 to 37

- Luke chapter 21 verses 5 to 36

When we exegete these accounts, we shall treat them in harmony. What is so special about these prophecies is that they come directly from the mouth of Christ. We have our Lord's description of the things to come, in very plain language. This is what Jesus wants us to know and as we examine other prophetic statements in the NT, we shall expect them to be in perfect harmony with what is said here by Jesus.

The disciples could have harmonised the three accounts but they did not. This suggests that the Spirit of God did not consider that important and it must also suggest that the importance of the discourse does not lie in its order but its substance. Further, we cannot in all honesty treat the three accounts separately but together since it is the way that we normally examine scriptural issues by seeing what the Bible has to say, in each and every place, what is said on the same subject. For example, it would not give a full picture of what the scripture has to say on marriage and divorce, if we limited our study to Deuteronomy. We must use scripture on scripture, verse upon verse, to get a complete picture.

Before examining the Olivet discourse, which is the last of the Five Discourses of Matthew, I want to set the background, or rather the location of the discourse. It is given to the disciples on Mount Olivet or the Mount of Olives, which appears a number of times in the OT. It is a mountain ridge east of and adjacent to the Jerusalem's Old City and named for the olive groves that once covered its slopes. As the sun rose in the east, the Mount of Olives would have cast a shadow over the Temple. which you could have easily seen towards the west.

We read of David's ascent of the mount when he was overthrown as king by his son Absalom. *2Sa 15:30 And David went up by the ascent of **mount Olivet**, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up. 2Sa 15:31 And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness. 2Sa 15:32 And it came to pass, that when David was come to the top of the mount, where he worshipped God, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat rent, and earth upon his head:*

We might consider that Jesus too is following that same path of rejection that his ancestor David followed. His closing words to the multitudes and disciples before He left might be an echo of David's own sentiments, *Mat 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Mat 23:38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. Mat 23:39 For I say unto you, **Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.***

From the "last supper", they process to the Mount of Olives. *Mat 26:28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. Mat 26:29 But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. Mat 26:30 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the **mount of Olives.***

The Mount of Olives was also the departure point for Jesus at His Ascension. *1:9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 1:10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 1:11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. 1:12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called **Olivet**, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.* The Mount of Olives, then, is historically appropriate when it come to conclusion of Christ's earthly ministry.

The "Olivet discourse" begins as we meet Jesus at the Temple, observing how people were putting money in the Treasury, an event that Luke and Mark record. *Luk 21:1 And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. Luk 21:2 And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. Luk 21:3 And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: Luk 21:4 For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.* In the midst of such dramatic events and with profound concepts about the future of the nation in their thoughts, there is time to observe the mundane offering of a Jewish widow who *Mk 12:44....out of her penury cast in all her life*. Now, there is commitment for you. She wasn't just prepared to give her life, she actually did give it. Have you ever wondered what this dear soul feasted on that evening but more importantly, did she join the early church? What did our Lord return to her in secret? Yet even a thousand well meaning widows could not turn the tide of the Divine purpose. Looking away from the Treasury Our Lord casts His Divine eye over the building and predicts that it will all be brought down to the ground.

Jesus had already implied the destruction of the Temple after He purged it of the money changers at the start of His ministry. *Joh 2:18 Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Joh 2:19 Jesus answered and said unto them, **Destroy this temple**, and in three days I will raise it up.* The Jews thought He was talking of Herod's Temple but in fact, He was talking about His own body but not this time. Now He uses the word 'hieros', which as we have seen means the whole Temple complex. Jesus is predicting the total destruction of Herod's Temple.

Bear in mind that you and I look back on these events with the wisdom and knowledge of hindsight, which they did not have. We post-interpret the events, so to speak. It is as we have already read the conclusion of the book and know how it all ends. They are clueless. Their Messianic hopes were still centred around the Mosaic law, its sacrifices and offerings, a restored kingdom and an earthly king. The Temple was after all the focus of national worship and they still have not grasped the idea of Jesus death and resurrection. They are firmly stuck in what we call, the Older Testament.

It is no surprise then that the remark by Jesus that The Temple would be broken down must have caused the disciples some considerable consternation. It was part of their tradition going back to Solomon and as these disciples knew only too well, the reason for the destruction of the Temple on that last occasion was national apostasy. Not only that, the apostasy was the cause of the nation being led away into 70 years of captivity. Last time it was the Babylonians, this time, would it be the Romans and their legions? This was the fear of the Sanhedrin, *Joh 11:48 If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.* Jesus

was, in their minds, a threat to national stability. In their hearts, there must have been a sense of 'déjà vu' and if Jesus was right, things were looking very bad for the nation.

The Olivet discourse is delivered under the Old Covenant to Jewish disciples who as yet have little idea of the coming Crucifixion. Christianity did not exist and to them, Judaism was the true Faith, They have no clear idea of a "second coming" because the first "going" hasn't happened and the reasons for that "going" are also unclear to them at this time. Put yourself in the positions of these disciples. You are living in an occupied land, garrisoned with battle hardened soldiers of an alien empire. Rebellions occur all the time. Life was uncertain and life was cheap with the average life expectancy being around 40 to 50 years. Your hope lies beyond this life but you still have to get through it and what you really want to hear is that things will get better. You don't want to hear that your place of worship is going to be destroyed and certainly, as Jesus begins to unwind the prophecy, you do not want to hear the woes and desolation that are coming. This prophecy is seemingly of the school of Jeremiah but it is not without a silver lining.

Jesus delivers His prophecy without interruption and there are no questions recorded after it. This might imply that they fully understood what had been said to them, or to the contrary, they had not a clue about it and so like many of us, would have kept silent. It starts with a statement:

The prediction of the destruction of the Temple		
<p><i>Mat 24:1 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.</i></p>	<p><i>Mar 13:1 And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!</i></p> <p><i>Mar 13:2 And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.</i></p>	<p><i>Luk 21:5 And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said,</i></p> <p><i>Luk 21:6 As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.</i></p>

The Temple would be destroyed but just when, a precise date, is not made absolutely clear. There is also **NO** statement of comfort saying, "do not worry because it will be rebuilt again". No, this ornate structure, with its beautiful stonework, at which the disciples marvelled, was going to be demolished stone by stone until it was a heap of rubble. Imagine looking at some great building, a national treasure, perhaps St Paul's cathedral or Parliament buildings and then see them wantonly destroyed in an act of vandalism.

Like the disciples, we would ask "When is it going to happen and when will it all end". As the disciples follow that ancient walk from the Temple to the Mount of Olives, what confusion and fears must have run through their thoughts? Yet who better to answer them. And Jesus answers them, not perhaps the news they wanted but a very straight answer. There was no date fixing but the events as they unfold would indicate where they were in history. Perhaps some, if they heeded the words of Jesus would avoid the coming horrors, others would avoid the deceptions of the false Christ, the anti-Christ.

I was reminded of one of Jesus' ancestors, the mother of Boaz, mother in law to Ruth, a prostitute who lived in Jericho. Her name was Rahab and she like the inhabitants of Canaan were in fear of the coming tribulation. *Jos 2:9 And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you.* Rahab lived on the walls of Jericho, *Jos 2:15 Then she let them down by a cord through the window: for her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall.* She helped the spies from the Israeli army to escape from the city.

Living on the walls of Jericho was one of the most dangerous places to be in the light of impending events. None the less, she was given her prophetic instructions, *Jos 2:18 Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee.* *Jos 2:19 And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him.*

Well you know the story from Sunday school, how that the priests walked around the city for six days, blowing their trumpets. Can you imagine what it was like living in Jericho? Can you imagine the fear and panic every morning when they heard **the sound of the trumpets** and looked over the battlements to see if the army was making its advance. The hushed voices in the houses speculating as to what would happen. The ministry of propaganda, the false prophets saying don't worry it will turn out alright. Food prices soaring, people hiding their wealth, some turning to drink, others debauching themselves to drive away the reality of what was happening outside the walls of Jericho.

In one house, situated on the walls, the view was very clear. They could see it unfolding beneath them. Calmly, they had gathered together as a family as they were instructed. They had spoken to no one else just as they had been told. Calmly, they counted down the days as events reached their climax. They had trusted the word they were given and they hung from their window the scarlet rope to show where they lived. The day arrived. *Jos 6:16 And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city.* *Jos 6:17 And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.* The walls fell flat, that is, all except Rahab's section. It stood as a memorial to her faith. We too anticipate the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet and we too shall be delivered as it sounds.

I believe that our God knows how to deliver us. *2Pe 2:6 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;* *2Pe 2:7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:* *2Pe 2:8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)* *2Pe 2:9 **The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:***

Whatever tribulation we have here, it works together for good to us who love God and are called according to His purpose. Once there was a king who had a very loyal servant. The servant was a child of God and the king was not. The servant would always tell the king; God is good and everything He does is perfect. One day the two of them went hunting and there was an accident. The king lost one of his fingers because of the accident and he asked the servant if God was so good



and perfect, why did he allow him to lose a finger? The servant maintained that God was good and perfect. This infuriated the king and he ordered the servant to be put in jail.

After a while, the king decided to go hunting – alone. He was captured by a savage tribe who took him to their village to sacrifice him to their gods. When he was on the altar, one of the tribesmen saw that the king had one finger missing. Deciding that he was not perfect, he could not be a perfect sacrifice and so they let him go. Upon his arrival in his own village, he ordered the servant to be freed. He told the story to the servant and the servant said, “You see my king, but for the loss of only one finger, God saved your life. He is good and perfect”. The king acknowledged this, but asked the servant: “So, if God is so good and perfect, why did He allow you to be put in prison?” The servant said: “If I was not put in prison, I would have accompanied you on the hunting trip and I would have been sacrificed in your place. Hence God saved both our lives, through the loss of your finger. God is good and perfect”. It will all work out for good to us also.

## **Chap 22. The Olivet discourse – 2. Wars and rumours of wars**

The Olivet discourse is one chapter long and can be read in 3 minutes and it is not particularly complicated. Men have made it complicated by stringing texts together like beads in all sorts of complex combinations. Magicians of the last times rearranging the deck of scripture, complicating the word, I think, beyond its simple meaning. In their convoluted picture of the last days they have none of the simplicity of the Olivet discourse. Here, in this short statement, we hear directly from the mouth of God. We hear what the future holds.

You may then say to me, well, if it is all so simple, why are you spending so much effort on it? Primarily, because we have been infected with ideas long before we came to the knowledge for ourselves. Our thoughts have been coloured and prejudiced already. I want to try to restore that simplicity in Christ and focus on Him. I also want to leave some principles to guide our thinking. When we read Matthew 24, it is not just what is answered in this discourse that is of interest, it is what is NOT answered. What things does Jesus NOT speak about that modern prophetic teachers obsess about? Jesus sets out the table of events and it is surprisingly wanting of the many ideas that some people read into the future events. Where are:

- Massive outpouring of the Spirit and Conversions at the End time?
- The Church triumphant on Earth (as the religion of mankind)?
- The restoration of Israel to a Nation state?
- The Temple restored (third Temple)?
- The restoration of Jewish sacrifices (in a rebuilt Temple)?
- A Millennium?
- Christ reigning on this earth?
- The Final judgement (for believers)?
- A final earthly war between the Saints and the Unbelievers, or the Jews and their enemies on a mountain in Israel, before the End (Armageddon)?

I do not think that it is an answer to say that Jesus left it to others to fill in the gaps that He left blank. I think that He answers the questions sufficiently.



The Disciples questions		
<p>Mat 24:3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>when shall these things be? and</b></li> <li>2. <b>what shall be the sign of thy coming, and</b></li> <li>3. <b>of the end of the world?</b></li> </ol>	<p>Mar 13:3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately,</p> <p>Mar 13:4 Tell us,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>When shall these things be? and</b></li> <li>2. <b>what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?</b></li> </ol>	<p>Luk 21:7 And they asked him, saying, Master,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>but when shall these things be? and</b></li> <li>2. <b>what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass</b></li> </ol>

Depending on the version you examine, there are either 3 Questions ( Matthew) or 2 Questions (Mark and Luke). **“When shall these things be”** and **“The sign when these shall be fulfilled”**. I think that in the minds of these disciples is the idea that somehow, the destruction of the Temple is associated with the end of the world (αἰών = aiōn = age) and the coming of Christ. In Matthew’s Jewish mind, the end of the age is associated with these events. Note also that Matthew’s detailed account of the rebuke to the Pharisees in chapter 23, is not included in Luke and Mark’s account. Matthew’s account is particularly focused towards a Jewish audience who would have understood the legal references, for example, *Mat 23:16 Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!*

The idea that the destruction of the Temple and the end (of the age) are concurrent are not true. Jesus issues a caveat.

The Caveat		
<p>Mat 24:4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, <b>Take heed that no man deceive you.</b></p> <p>Mat 24:5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.</p> <p>Mat 24:6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, <b>but the end is not yet</b></p>	<p>Mar 13:5 And Jesus answering them began to say, <b>Take heed lest any man deceive you:</b></p> <p>Mar 13:6 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.</p> <p>Mar 13:7 And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but <b>the end shall not be yet.</b></p>	<p>Luk 21:9 But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but <b>the end is not by and by.</b></p>

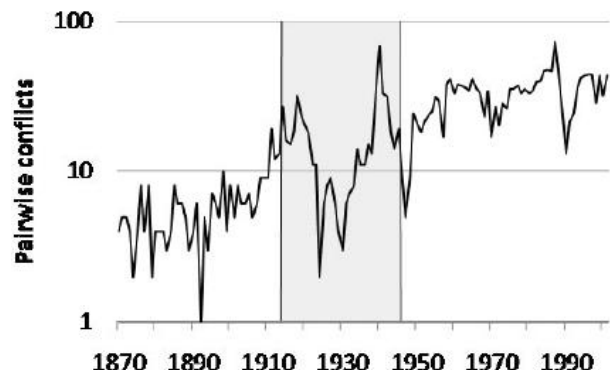
Firstly and most importantly, we are warned against deceit and in particular, the rise of false Christs, false Messiahs. I do not think that this just means the “looney” fringe of which there are many, like David Icke the sports reporter who declared himself the “son of the Godhead” or Vernon Wayne Howell who changed his name to Cyrus and became David Koresh, like Cyrus a messianic figure with Messianic aspirations who perished with his acolytes in Waco, Texas. Then there was Jim Jones and the “people’s temple” who all drank cyanide together and perished in the jungles of Guyana. No, there are other false saviours and deliverers.

The apostle warns us that a false Christ can be part of a false gospel. *2Co 11:3 However, I'm afraid that as the snake deceived Eve by its tricks, so your minds may somehow be lured away from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. 2Co 11:4 When someone comes to you telling about another Jesus whom we didn't tell you about, you're willing to put up with it. When you receive a spirit that is different from the Spirit you received earlier, you're also willing to put up with that. When someone tells you good news that is different from the Good News you already accepted, you're willing to put up with that too. GW.*

This is a subtle poison that seeps into the mind and constructs a different Christ. *2Co 11:13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 2Co 11:14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. 2Co 11:15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.* What point should we draw here? I think that it is simply that we should not be stampeded into thinking that the end of the world is upon us because there are people pretending to be Messiahs. Neither should our thoughts be shaped by deceivers pretending to support the things of Christ

Then of course there is the other apocalyptic dread, the Armageddon syndrome. War! Of the past 3,400 years, humans have been entirely at peace for only 268 of them, or just 8 percent of recorded history. That means that most people have in some measure been touched by human conflict. It is something we can relate to and its consequences are something that we least want. Now we often assume that when Jesus is speaking of “wars and rumours of wars” that He is implying that they will be on the increase. That is not what Jesus actually says. However it is the case according to a study by Harrison and Wolf<sup>15</sup> that wars are on the increase.

They comment that the increase in the frequency of pair-wise conflicts can be explained by two principal factors: economic growth and the proliferation of borders. The number of countries has thus almost quadrupled since 1870, rising from 47 countries in 1870 to 187 in 2001.



Harrison stated: ‘More pairs of countries have clashed because there have been more pairs. This is not reassuring: it shows that there is a close connection between wars and the creation of states and new borders.’ Looking specifically at the countries that have initiated disputes, the study shows that there is no tendency for richer countries (defined by a higher GDP per head) to make more frequent military interventions than others. The readiness to engage in war is spread relatively uniformly across the global income distribution. Mark Harrison’s conclusion was that: ‘The very things that should make politicians less likely to want war – productivity growth, democracy, and trading opportunities – have also made war cheaper. We have more wars, not because we want them, but because we can.’

<sup>15</sup> [http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/newsandevents/pressreleases/wars\\_steadily\\_increase/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/newsandevents/pressreleases/wars_steadily_increase/)

This is all good stuff to spread fear and paranoia about impending disaster such as a nuclear war and plagues of locusts. We have reduced it to a symbol of fear, the Doomsday Clock<sup>16</sup>, which is a symbolic clock face, representing a countdown to possible global catastrophe (e.g. nuclear war or climate change). The closer they set the Clock to midnight, the closer the scientists believe the world is to global disaster. The most recent officially announced setting was three minutes to midnight (11:57 pm).

Of course, these same scientists are the ones that tell you, that you self-assembled out of mud and slime billions and billions of years ago. These same scientists believe that chemicals can write computer programmes, self assemble information and self replicate, given enough time. That relatively recently, you were with your ancestors up a tree living on bananas. They also told you God does not exist in their materialist universe but that is the nature of modern peer pressure “science”.

What point should we draw here? Firstly, Jesus says nothing about the changing frequency of wars. He does not say that wars will increase and that this is an important sign for us, that it is significant as if it were some countdown clock to midnight. That the more wars we hear about, the closer to the end we are. **He does not say that.** Nor even that wars are a sign of the end. Do you see how we get fixated with this? Yet the emphasis for us should NOT be on the “wars and rumours of wars”. They happen and they will happen and we can do nothing about it. Our emphasis should be on these words, **“be not troubled”** and **“be not terrified”** because it is **NOT** yet the end. **“Keep Calm and Carry On”<sup>17</sup>** as the poster said.

We should get the message out there that our attitudes are not to be shaped by the world’s catastrophes but by Christ’s words. We need to raise our morale and build Jesus’ words into our soul, as Bunyan’s pilgrim, “He’ll fear not what men say”.

In Charles Dickens’s *A Tale of Two Cities*, set during the French Revolution, the hero Sidney Carton substitutes himself to redeem a convicted man. On his way to the Guillotine, he travels with a young seamstress who has been falsely convicted. As they approach the scaffold in the tumbrils, the writer comments, “He has not relinquished her patient hand in getting out, but still holds it as he promised. He gently places her with her back to the crashing engine that constantly whirrs up and falls, and she looks into his face and thanks him”. Carton turns the girl away from the sight of blood and butchery, puts the guillotine behind her and gets her to look at him. That is what we are encouraged to do here with “the wars and rumours of wars”. If you ever want peace in this world make sure you are looking into Jesus eyes not on what is around you. Do not look at the giants of the land and fear but look to what God has promised. It is not how big the enemy is, it is how big our God is.

*Heb 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the*

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<sup>16</sup> It has been maintained since 1947 by the members of the Science and Security Board of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, who are in turn advised by the Governing Board and the Board of Sponsors, including 18 Nobel Laureates.

<sup>17</sup> “Keep Calm and Carry On” was a motivational poster produced by the British government in 1939 in preparation for the Second World War. The poster was intended to raise the morale of the British public, threatened with widely predicted mass air attacks on major cities. Although 2.45 million copies were printed, and although the Blitz happened, the poster was hardly ever publicly displayed and was little known about until a copy was rediscovered in 2000. Why did they not use them to raise morale?

*race that is set before us, Heb 12:2 **Looking unto Jesus** the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

That said, I am not advocating complacency.

What have we learned so far? Our lives are not to be governed by fear or rumours, “rumours of wars”, neither are we to expect wars to be a signal of the end, to the contrary, **“but the end is not yet”**. Do not be frightened or terrified about the way of the world, says Jesus, because these things are necessary.

Is there going to be a big earthly battle with the weapons of men? An apocalyptic meltdown? *Rev 16:13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. Rev 16:14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Rev 16:15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. Rev 16:16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.*

The so called battle of Armageddon is wheeled out as a frightener to induce conversion by despair. It is a common tactic of the JW's and others to get people interested in “god”. It is the wolf chasing goats into a pen walled with fear. Now ask yourself, why, if this is such a climactic event in the history of the world, does not Jesus talk about a final battle, the battle of Armageddon?

Why is it Paul does not talk about a climactic battle in his statements on the last days? Why is it Peter also does not talk about a climactic battle in his statements on the last days? *2Pe 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*

Why is it that no one is talking about Armageddon except the Apostle John, in Revelation? I think that we would better understand Armageddon if we viewed it as the “battle of the three frogs”. Remember that we looked at the term “Lord’s Day” when trying to identify the time or place of the prophecy of Revelation. We suggested that the Lord’s Day is the day of God’s judgement. It is the flip side of man’s day or man’s judgement. Revelation, we suggested gives us a world view from the Divine point of view. The things which are happening that are out of our sight. The battles with Principalities and Powers.

Now if we are correct, Armageddon is the spiritual climax when the...” *three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which **go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.*** It is the consequence of the satanic influences amongst rulers and men that will bring them to that sudden visitation of Christ the King. It is the climax of the spiritual battle that we will witness.

I believe that the view that we are postulating harmonises with Paul. The world is deluded such that they believe the satanic lie and it works to bring them to judgement. *2Th 2:7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. 2Th 2:8*

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, **whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:** 2Th 2:9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 2Th 2:10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 2Th 2:11 **And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:** 2Th 2:12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

In conclusion, then. There will be wars and rumours of wars but do not be afraid. There is not one war that will signal the end, war is just part of how the degenerate and sinful world works. There is no indication of a global meltdown that signifies a worldly war called Armageddon. Yet we should all take heed because that does not mean that Forces, Principalities and Powers are not at work.

## Chap 23. The Olivet discourse – 3. The satanic forces

There are 3 questions that the disciples asked in respect of the destruction of the Temple of Herod.

4. *When shall these things be? and*
5. *what shall be the sign of thy coming, and*
6. *of the end of the world?*

I do not think that we have started to answer these questions yet, since we are being shown a general overview of things to come and Jesus prepares us disciples for that. “Wars and rumours of wars” are just part of the great disturbances coming upon the earth and we are still dealing with that “caveat” that we began to examine last time, as Jesus describes a time of sorrows and great conflict to come.

The beginning of sorrows.		
Mat 24:7 For <b>nation shall rise against nation</b> , and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. Mat 24:8 All these are <b>the beginning of sorrows.</b>	Mar 13:8 <b>For nation shall rise against nation</b> , and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are <b>the beginnings of sorrows.</b>	Luk 21:10 Then said he unto them, <b>Nation shall rise against nation</b> , and kingdom against kingdom: Luk 21:11 And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.

There is no hope for this satanic world other than Christ. It will tear itself apart, it will call down God’s judgements, it will fight in vain against the Saviour of the World because it can do no other. Isa 57:20 *But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.* Isa 57:21 *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*

Now we look at these other signs of the times, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, fearful sights, signs from heaven, in addition to the wars. I am going to suggest that this is no new thing, even in the time of Jesus and had been going on for centuries. You only have to follow Israel's history to see the smiting and warfare not just among themselves but from the people around and about. It is nothing new. These are not a sign of the end, they are a sign of **"the beginning of the sorrows"**. The idea that the four horsemen of the Apocalypse are reserved for a future day is not correct. They are working and walking all around us.

It is also a fact that many of these events are interlinked, famine/war and environment/famine. Take Somalia for instance. Nearly 260,000 people died during the famine that hit Somalia from 2010 to 2012. Half of them were children under the age of five, according to a UN report funded by the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS Net). The United States (US\$181 million) was the largest donor of humanitarian assistance to Somalia in 2012, followed by the EU institutions (US\$83 million) and the United Kingdom (US\$82million). The US provided 18% (US\$678 million) of all humanitarian assistance to the country between 2003 and 2012. In 2013, Somalia had a UN-coordinated appeal of US\$1.2 billion, of which 51% of requirements were met. The country's Strategic Response Plan requested US\$933 million for 2014 (as of November 2014). Throwing money at it did not solve the deeper problems of culture and corruption. Yet in all of this God could have intervened as He did in ancient Egypt and saved the nation by wise governance. He did not and I take it that these signs of the end are carefully orchestrated by a loving God whose solution lies in the death of His only begotten son.

God's horsemen have been riding through the earth for millennia. In the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of Revelation, we see the sequence of the 7 seals being broken and the consequential loosing of judgements. When the last seal is broken (by Jesus Christ), it heralds the end of the age. *Rev 8:1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. Rev 8:2 And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.*

Of course you have seen this all before when Israel crossed into Canaan. *Jos 6:4 And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. Jos 6:5 And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.*

I suggested that the horses are not new. *Rev 6:1 And I saw that the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living beings saying, like a voice of thunder, "Come." Rev 6:2 And behold, a white horse. And he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering, and to conquer. Rev 6:3 And when He opened the second seal, I heard the second living being saying, "Come!" Rev 6:4 Another horse went out, fiery red, and it was granted to him that sat on it to take peace from the earth, so that they might kill each other; and there was given to him a great sword. Rev 6:5 And when He opened the third seal, I heard the third living being say, "Come." And behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. Rev 6:6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living beings, saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; but do not harm the oil and the wine." Rev 6:7 And when He*

*opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living being saying, "Come." Rev 6:8 And behold, a pale horse, and he who sat on it was named Death, and Hades was following him. And authority was given to him over a fourth of the earth, to kill with the sword, and with famine, and with death, and by the wild beasts of the earth.*

If we go back to the time of Esther and her father-in-law Darius, we encounter these horsemen in the Book of Zechariah. *Zec 1:7 Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, Zec 1:8 I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white. Zec 1:9 Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these be. Zec 1:10 And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, **These are they whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth.** Zec 1:11 And they answered the angel of the LORD that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, **behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest.** Zec 1:12 Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years? You see, they have been around for a long time and they walk the earth.*

I will speculate a little on what this might all mean. Remember that the world has been a war zone from the creation. The war was going on when the Earth was being formed and before. The problem of the fall was not just man, man was a symptom, the disease spread from outside of this world. *Eph 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* Although nothing much was said about the spiritual realm, we know that another created being was already fighting with God and it was his prime purpose to foment rebellion and bring death to God's new creation.

One might reverently speculate that this present Creation sprang out of God's desire to show that created beings would serve Him willingly and that to be subservient was not a punishment but a blessing. That unity with divinity was possible, yet at the expense of the death of death in the death of Christ (as John Owen put it). It cost a huge price. *Eph 3:9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: Eph 3:10 To the intent that now **unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,** Eph 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Can it be made any clearer?

The Church, the people of God, the redeemed of Christ are there, to teach a lesson to the Principalities, Powers and Angels. The only thing that these evil ones have taught us are rebellion and disloyalty. Now we are to teach them. What manner of people then should we be? We are not saved to be loafers in church doorways, Sunday singers, service providers, technicians of death and marriage. We are to show forth the glory of Christ's redemption. We are to be so developed and grown that we can do this. We should be more learned, more competent, more obedient, more godly because that enables us to do our task. We are not to leave it to others. We are to be the best warriors that God could ever desire.

Leaving aside the earthly reasons for hair coverings, focus on those words “because of the angels”. There is a heavenly reason, a lesson to Principalities and Powers. If you believe in angels, what are you showing them? *1Co 11:10 For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.*

It is difficult to imagine the nature of these unseen conflicts but they exist. Our fights are with them, *Eph 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* I think that John’s Revelation of Christ is a look behind the veil, so to speak. It looks, albeit symbolically, at the hidden conflicts of the world. There are strings being pulled, *Eph 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that **now worketh in the children** of disobedience:* Do not be misled. Everyone of those nice, kind, good people you see every day, who do not know Christ as Saviour, are working hard for satan and believe me, they will turn and rend you when the time is right. The devil pulls their chains as he did once yours and mine.

God Himself will use evil angels in His judgement upon the sinners. *Psa 78:49 He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them. Psa 78:50 He made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence; Psa 78:51 And smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham:*

We catch a glimpse as to what goes on in the book of Daniel. *Dan 10:11 And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Dan 10:12 Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. Dan 10:13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.* Michael is a protective angel of the Church and he will descend with Christ when He returns.

In David’s day, the devil would have David destroy his people, *1Ch 21:1 And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.* In Job’s day, the devil rode the length of the earth to do mischief, *Job 1:6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. Job 1:7 And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, **From going to and fro in the earth,** and from walking up and down in it.* In the day of King Ahab, lying spirits were at work..... *2Ch 18:20 Then there came out a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will entice him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? 2Ch 18:21 And he said, I will go out, and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the LORD said, Thou shalt entice him, and thou shalt also prevail: go out, and do even so.*

We see demonic interventions in the life of Jesus (His temptations), in the demon possessions of man, in related sicknesses, *Mat 9:33 And **when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake:** and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.* The devil is at work in the churches, *2Co*



11:13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 2Co 11:14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Rev 2:13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. They hinder the gospel, 1Th 2:18 Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us. The devils will even fight over the dead, Jud 1:9 Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. Even the weather can be manipulated, Job 1:19 And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

You cannot pass across the pages of scripture and not be aware of the vast unseen conflict that is going on. Men and devils, angels and demons all in conflict. Over what? It is a conflict over the soul of man to reveal the glory of God in Christ. Would, for example, a man like Job serve God for what He (God) was, not for what He would give or do? Job 1:8 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Job 1:9 Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Job 1:10 Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. Job 1:11 **But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.** Job 1:12 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD. Our God uses evil and He pits us against it to teach these Principalities and Powers a lesson.

Job loved God from his heart. Stripped of all that he loved in this life, stripped of all that he had laboured for and no doubt given thanks to God for, stripped even of his clothes Job 1:21 And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. Job 1:22 In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

I have heard of people who cast aside "god" because He did not do what they wanted in their lives. Some personal tragedy occurred and they viewed it as a betrayal by God, or they saw terrible sights and inhumanities and doubted a good God could do this. I can only say that these people did not have a clue about the cosmic battle for the soul of men. It started at the beginning and it is going on today. What sort of person do these people think God is? A god who sprinkles love everywhere like fairy dust? I will go further. If a man is not worshipping in spirit and in truth, he is worshipping the devil. If his Christ is manufactured in his own heart and comes not from the sacred page of the word of God, it is a false Christ. If it is a Christ who does not bother about sin, a Christ who loves without discipline, a Christ who is now working to readjust the Infrastructure to accommodate a multilane highway to heaven, then it is not Jesus of Nazareth. It is a false Christ and an Angel of light.

Yes, as Jesus says here, it is a sorrowful world, and we are at the beginning of those sorrows. It gets worse. "These are the beginning of the sorrows". So what precious remedy can I leave you with today in the midst of all of this horror? It is simply and wonderfully this. Joh 16:33 *These things I*

have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. Literally, “be of courage, I have conquered the Cosmos”. We are just working through the details of the Victory.

## Chap 24. The Olivet discourse – 4. The road to martyrdom

We have dealt with that opening “caveat” and now, Jesus focuses on the specifics of the last times. Jesus has first described a time of sorrows and great disturbances to come, so we must take care not to be deceived. *Mat 24:4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.* Christianity is never going to be a “bed of roses”, an easy option. It is a tough endurance race to the end. Coming to Jesus is not the end of your problems, it is the start of a new set of problems and we should expect persecution. Do not ever offer anyone a Gospel that promises an easy life. It is a false Gospel.

As we continue to examine the Olivet discourse, we might be tempted to think twice and begin to count the cost of discipleship. Remember the “Hard sayings” (Lk 14:26), it requires sacrifice to be a disciple. If the churches evangelised with the Gospel Jesus used, we might find that although churches might not be large, they would be full of far stronger and faithful individuals. However, the upside of these words today, is that you have been told what to expect.

Persecution		
<p><i>Mat 24:9 Then <b>shall they deliver you</b> up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be <b>hated</b> of all nations for my name's sake.</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:13 But <b>he that shall endure unto the end</b>, the same shall be saved.</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:14 And this <b>gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world</b> for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.</i></p>	<p><i>Mar 13:9 But take heed to yourselves: for <b>they shall deliver you</b> up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.</i></p> <p><i>Mar 13:10 And the gospel must first be published among all nations.</i></p> <p><i>Mar 13:11 But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.</i></p> <p><i>Mar 13:12 <b>Now the brother shall betray the brother</b> to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.</i></p> <p><i>Mar 13:13 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but <b>he that shall endure unto the end</b>, the same shall be saved.</i></p>	<p><i>Luk 21:12 But before all these, <b>they shall lay their hands on you</b>, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.</i></p> <p><i>Luk 21:13 And it shall turn to you for a testimony.</i></p> <p><i>Luk 21:14 Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer:</i></p> <p><i>Luk 21:15 For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.</i></p> <p><i>Luk 21:16 And <b>ye shall be betrayed both by parents</b>, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.</i></p> <p><i>Luk 21:17 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.</i></p> <p><i>Luk 21:18 But there shall not an hair of your head perish.</i></p> <p><i>Luk 21:19 In your patience possess ye your souls.</i></p>

What can you expect? Affliction, death, hatred, betrayal and rebellion in your family. If you thought that Christianity was about rolling through life in a rainbow coloured bus, singing “kumbaya”, banging tambourines and grinning at the world as it drifts by, listen to Paul, *2Co 5:4 For we that are in this tabernacle **do groan, being burdened**: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.* We groan. If we do not groan about being here, if we like it too much, we are not of that spirit. We Christians live in the valley of the shadow of death and we are fearless but we are not unrealistic about our prospects if we hold the line. Paul groans and so do we.

“What is it about Christianity that attracts this persecution?” Well let me put it another way, “What is it about Christianity that **does not** attract persecution?” What will **NOT** attract persecution is:

- A Jesus you represent who does not care what you believe
- A God who loves everyone (eventually including the devil)
- A view that hell is just an illusion and that God is not judgemental
- A view that sin is a mental aberration or a medical condition (e.g. greed and gluttony becomes a compulsive disorder, lust becomes “sex addiction”)
- A fear of what people will think of you
- A good set of unbelieving and worldly companions (you must be popular). This increases the devil’s influence over you
- Your ability to compromise the truth by using human reason
- Keeping quiet in the face of sin and opposition
- Succumbing to peer pressure on religious issues
- Failing to oppose sin in your family
- Failing to confront error and leaving it to others
- Joining a liberal church that does not accept the authority of scripture
- A personal commitment to 1 day a week, 2 hours of religion and the rest of time is yours
- ....and of course having a Bible you never read. You will not be persecuted.

The devil loves “good” people. He loves those ‘righteous’ people who avoid talking about the source of their righteousness. They can of course be the pillars of society, but as long as they leave Jesus out of the conversation, satan is delighted. They can also attend church because for the most part it will do them no good, so satan has another victory. In this world, appearances are everything and as satan knows too well, the antichrist, the false Prophet and the false teacher are actively working in the churches already and they have a huge following.

But what attracts the persecution? It is pointing out the dirty holes and filthy crevices that this monstrous deceiver satan lives in. You saw the other week how with our brother Stephen, “they saw his face as an angel”. He spoke against them, *Act 7:54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.* They did not want to know Christ or have anything to do with Him. Yet they loved religion, it made them feel important, the people deferred to them and satan fed their wicked souls. Rock that rotten boat and the devil will soon be upon you.

Have you noticed that this is just what the devil wants you to be like? Tepid, compromising, all embracing, non-judgemental and compliant to the age. Commitment to Christ will always attract persecution but be warned, failure to commit attracts rejection from Christ. *Mat 10:32 Whosoever*

*therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. Mat 10:33 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*

Over the years, I have noticed something else about persecution. *Luk 21:12 But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. Luk 21:13 And it shall turn to you for a testimony.* At the time this is spoken, congregations as we know them, “churches”, did not exist but were called synagogues, places of gathering together. In other words, religious congregations will persecute you. That is what I have noticed. Liberal, institutional, modernist, bible rejecting congregations have been the most hostile to my faith in Christ. I have been called all sorts of names but now it just encourages me even more that the Bible is true! The closer I move to Jesus, the more the hatred will grow. It is part of the “job description”.

Paul the Apostle exhorts his young protégé Timothy, *2Ti 3:12 Yea, **and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.** 2Ti 3:13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. 2Ti 3:14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; 2Ti 3:15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.* Carry on, says Paul and fight the good fight. It is a world full of deceit and men’s minds are corrupt and deceived, just keep on the path that you started upon.

The scripture records that when the demoniac was healed, it frightened the people. *Mar 5:15 And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and **they were afraid.*** Now you might have thought that they would have been afraid of the demons but no, they are more afraid of sobriety, sanity, right mindedness. That is what really frightens people in a mad devilish world. It is the fear that grips satan himself. It is the thought that man should ever recover his right mind and be seated back with God and in conversation with His God. As Luke records, *Luk 8:35 Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, **sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.*** No devil can sit at the feet of Jesus.

In the UK, the persecution of the non-conformists by the institutional (so called) Church of England was appalling. Those who wished to worship Christ with freedom of conscience were punished by the State church that threw every obstacle it could in their path. In 1660 the English Parliament at the start of the Restoration, was determined to crack down on the many independent churches that had sprung up during the time of Oliver Cromwell (the period between 1649 and 1660 when England was without a king) and make Anglicanism the state religion again. They passed a series of acts called the Clarendon code, a set of laws to persecute non-conformists (Protestants who did not belong to the Church of England). The Corporation Act of 1661 said that all officials in towns must be members of the Church of England.

The Act of Uniformity 1662 said that all clergy must use the Book of Common Prayer. About 2,000 clergy who disagreed resigned. Furthermore the Conventicle<sup>18</sup> Act of 1664 forbade unauthorized religious meetings of more than 5 people unless they were all of the same household. Finally the

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<sup>18</sup> Conventicle: an assembly of more than 5 persons.

Five Mile Act of 1665 forbade non-Anglican ministers to come within 5 miles of incorporated towns. (Towns with a mayor and corporation). John Bunyan, the author of Pilgrim's Progress, was imprisoned for the best part of 12 years for unlicensed preaching, and although in 1672 Charles II allowed non-conformists to license places of worship, he revoked this three years later, and it was only with the Act of Toleration in 1689 under the Protestant William and Mary, that there was much more religious freedom.

Now to try and defend these tactics as ignorance on the part of the perpetrators, completely misses the point. It was satanic, totally anti-scriptural and unchristian. They are indefensible acts against Christians. These ideas did not arise in the heart of Christ and they were not carefully crafted from the Word of God. They were calculated by satan to oppose the preaching of the saving Gospel of Christ by those dear souls who wanted to proclaim the blood of Christ to a sinful world. That is it. They wanted it stopped. Just like those wicked Jews who when they heard Stephen, "stopped" their ears, *Act 7:57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and **stopped their ears**, and ran upon him with one accord.* These so called religious leaders then and through history will press their hands upon their ears to avoid the truth. The devil does not want you to hear the truth. *Luk 8:12 Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh **the devil, and taketh away the word** out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.*

Do you want a simple test that will show you where satan is at work in a person's life? It is this. Do they receive the scripture or do they fight against it. Satan never accepts the word of God but always seeks to change it into a lie. They will deny it in practice, by which I mean, they can happily accept it until it is brought to bear upon personal practical matters. When people take offence at the word of God, when they have their feelings hurt by it, you have struck the heart of the devil.

Betrayal is not as difficult to bear if you have heeded the words of Jesus. *Luk 14:26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.* You see, if our Christianity is strong enough it will cause those convictions that will either bring people to Christ or alienate them from Him. When that happens, then persecution is not far behind. *Mar 13:12 Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. Mar 13:13 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.* I observe also, that people who take offence are often more concerned with their own self image, than with offending to Christ.

Jesus, in the passage before us in the Olivet Discourse, wanted to disabuse us of any idea that the World's end was suddenly at hand or that by some special providence, we would escape persecution, imprisonment, hatred by so called friends and family. No, He says, it is part of what will happen. Before He gets on to the issue of His coming, He tells us about what we are to suffer. Was that ever part of the Gospel you heard?

Now I want you to ask yourself, if, the last time that you heard anyone preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, was it just limited to your personal salvation? Was it just about you and what you could get out of Jesus? Was it only about the benefits package of the Cross of Christ? If that was all it was you have been robbed. It is important that we know these things so we are not deceived in our lives. Let me tell you what is also part of that Gospel, the other parts that cannot be separated from it without preaching another Gospel, these are:

1. If you come to Christ you must come as a disciple, a follower. You have work to do because it is the START of life not the end. Life starts at the Cross it does not end there.
2. Forgiveness is the start of the process of reconciliation with God, not the end.
3. Faith without living the life is no life. *Joh 11:26 And whosoever **liveth** and **believeth** in me shall never die. Believest thou this?*
4. There are wider issues about fighting Principalities and Powers. It is also about the triumph of Christ's kingdom over the Universe. We are soldiers not holiday makers.
5. The church exists not simply to indulge its own intellect but to teach the Cosmos the manifold wisdom of God.
6. Persecution is an inevitable part of discipleship.
7. Suffering may be part of that demonic persecution.
8. Christ must be above all else in your life, above all other relationships, otherwise you are an idolater.
9. You cannot serve two masters. Make your mind up.
10. You will be saved if you endure to the end but you will be utterly deceived if you think you are saved without an ongoing personal relationship with Christ.

Jesus warns us here that the times will come when love will grow cold. Not just a few people but most people. *Mat 24:12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. Mat 24:13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. Mat 24:14 **And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.***

The Apostle Paul reiterates this, *2Ti 3:1 This know also, that in the last days **perilous times shall come.** 2Ti 3:2 For men shall be **lovers of their own selves**, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 2Ti 3:3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, 2Ti 3:4 Traitors, heady, highminded, **lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;** 2Ti 3:5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: **from such turn away.***

Now I conclude here with this final remark. The Gospel is not mentioned in Jesus lesson to us here as the redeeming feature of all Nations. By that I mean, Jesus does not teach that all Nations will be saved by this Gospel or even a part of them will be saved. The Gospel brings judgement to the nations who refuse Christ as King. The Gospel is a witness (literally martyr) to all Nations, those Nations that our Lord has warned us of a few lines earlier, those Nations who would hate us, *Mat 24:9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and **ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.*** In the face of such hatred, in the face of such opposition, Christ declares the whole council of God, the Gospel, through His people.

Here in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, we see it clearly expressed. *Eph 3:9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: Eph 3:10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places **might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.*** If you thought the Gospel would save the World, think again. What it will do is declare the wisdom of God ahead of His Final Victory.

There you are. We have been adequately warned. It should not surprise us or cause us to fear but if we have listened to what Jesus said it will galvanise us to be prepared for the attack.

## Chap 25. The Olivet discourse – 5. The history of Daniel

We remind ourselves that we are answering 3 questions that the disciples asked in respect of the destruction of the Temple of Herod.

1. *When shall these things be? and*
2. *what shall be the sign of thy coming, and*
3. *(signs) of the end of the world?*

We have seen, so far, in the introduction the “beware” or the “caveat” that Jesus gave, *Mat 24:4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, **Take heed** that no man deceive you.* We have also learned that much else accompanies these important events that will impact upon our personal lives. In short, Christians will not be the most popular people in the world and that world is tearing itself apart as it moves inexorably towards its final judgement. Now these things must be and Jesus tells us so, that we might be spiritually prepared and that we might draw comfort and consolation from Him and Him alone.

In this life we can if we are careless, become those people who continually ‘crisis’ manage. I mean by this, that some are never ever prepared for any adversity and consequently, never expect anything untoward to happen in their lives. Then when things change and go wrong, a crisis, panic sets in and they crisis manage. They fail to understand the nature of the crisis from Christ’s point of view and so they launch into prayers that God would heal, restore, make good and put the clock back so that they can go back to their old ways. It is a totally unrealistic way of living with Jesus, to appeal to him, to cry out to Him ONLY when things go wrong. Our daily walk is part of our continuing preparation though which we will be ready for eventualities, such that crises do not overtake us. We will develop an understanding of the way we are going, through a continuing relationship, not by a series of unexpected experiences. Jesus has given us advice, we neglect it at our peril.

Now, we move on to the issues that concerned the disciples. I will observe in passing that they were not the most important issues for Jesus, concerning His disciples, because He does not deal with them first. His love to His disciples draws Him to warn of the general conditions that accompany the latter days. It is after this warning that Jesus begins to answer the first question, “***When shall these things be?***” When will this historic edifice, Herod’s temple, be brought down to the dust? When will the glory of the Temple and its buildings of stone be utterly brought down to the ground? Let us look at the three accounts.

The abomination of desolation		
<i>Mat 24:15 When ye therefore shall see <b>the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet</b>, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)</i>	<i>Mar 13:14 But when ye shall see <b>the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet</b>, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let <b>them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains:</b></i>	<i>Luk 21:20 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know <b>that the desolation thereof is nigh.</b></i> <i>Luk 21:21 Then let <b>them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains;</b> and let them which are in the midst of it depart</i>

<p><b>mountains:</b></p> <p>Mat 24:17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:</p> <p>Mat 24:18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.</p> <p>Mat 24:19 And <b>woe unto them that are with child</b>, and to them that give suck in those days!</p> <p>Mat 24:20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:</p> <p>Mat 24:21 <b>For then shall be great tribulation</b>, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.</p> <p>Mat 24:22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.</p>	<p>Mar 13:15 And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house:</p> <p>Mar 13:16 And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.</p> <p>Mar 13:17 But <b>woe to them that are with child</b>, and to them that give suck in those days!</p> <p>Mar 13:18 And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.</p> <p>Mar 13:19 <b>For in those days shall be affliction</b>, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.</p> <p>Mar 13:20 And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.</p>	<p>out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.</p> <p>Luk 21:22 For these be the <b>days of vengeance</b>, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.</p> <p>Luk 21:23 But <b>woe unto them that are with child</b>, and to them that give suck, in those days! for <b>there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people</b>.</p> <p>Luk 21:24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.</p>
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We are at once confronted with this idea of “desolation”, the “abomination of desolation” which somehow lies at the heart of this destruction. It is something that is mentioned in the book of the prophet Daniel. I draw your attention to the fact that when Daniel mentions this, there is nothing much remaining of Solomon’s Temple as it has been destroyed and the post exilic Temple, the second Temple, has not yet been built.

I feel bound to take an overview of the book of Daniel because it seems to me quite wrong to pull a few texts out, without examining the context of those texts. Texts must be understood in the context of the book they are written in and they must be seen in the wider context of the history in which they occur and how that in turn fits in with the wider scope of scripture. We cannot possibly understand the “abomination of desolation” unless we understand how the phrase fits into history.

Daniel is in some ways a strange book because it is a combination of both history and prophetic vision. It is also important to understand when Daniel is writing his book and where he is, in relation to the history of Israel. Well that is satisfied quite easily because Daniel and his young friends are among the captives taken from Jerusalem when the corrupt king Jehoiakim is cast down. *Dan 1:1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. Dan 1:2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god ..... Dan 1:5 And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. Dan 1:6 Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:*



Daniel's life is set between the destruction of the Temple of Solomon and the restoration of the remnant after the 70 years of captivity. It is quite probable that Daniel has passed into glory before the return to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the second Temple. Daniel is a victim of the captivity, which in turn was a result of the nation of Israel failing to obey God's law.

The book of Daniel starts off with the story of how these young captives were treated. They were treated exceptionally kindly. I remind you that it was not the purpose of Nebuchadnezzar to undertake a holocaust upon his vanquished subjects. They were after all extremely valuable assets and it made sense to use them for the glory of his kingdom. Daniel and his companions were to be integrated into Babylon and that is how the book of Daniel opens. These specially selected "high fliers" as we would call them today, would become servants of Babylon. If Nebuchadnezzar can win over his captives with his fine dining and luxurious life, they would soon forget their origins.

I read recently that this is one of the problems that foreign ambassadors have. If they stay too long in a country, there can be problems. This is a comment made about Michael Josselson who became the executive director of the newly founded Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) in 1950. The CCF was a product of discussions between several American and European intellectuals about the need to emphasize the cultural merits of liberal democracies (West) and to oppose totalitarian (Soviet) influences on arts and free thought. In other words, he was to champion the American influence pushing the western cultural view as opposed to the Soviet view.

This was the comment made about Josselson by the British author Stephen Spender:

"Josselson was a rather tragic character. I think that he was in the position of an ambassador who stays in a country too long, and instead of representing the people who've sent them there starts representing the people to whom he's sent, which is why **ambassadors are never allowed to stay too long in countries** because they tend to switch in this way. And I think that this kind of switch happened with Josselson".

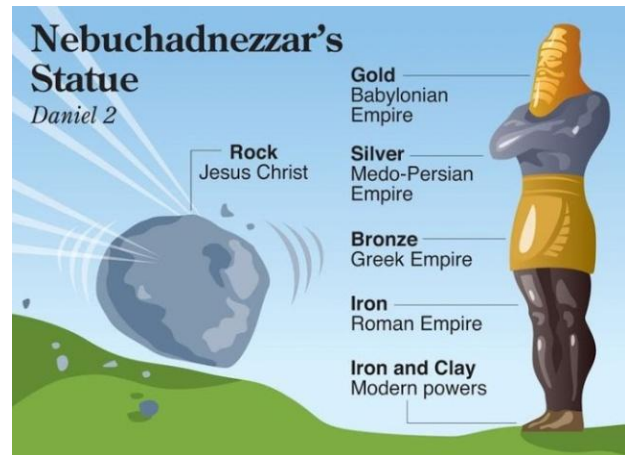
So just as this man Josselson began to be sympathetic to the culture he was supposed to be opposed to, we can see how easily Daniel could have been subsumed into the Babylonian way of life and started to work against his Jewish roots. How did Daniel cope? He refused to adopt the local diet. Every mealtime would be a reminder to him that Babylon was not his home. When he prayed, he threw open his windows to Jerusalem and gave voice to his God. He refused to forget that he was a son of Jehovah. You see, you have to make regular visits home if you are to retain a sense of perspective in this life. So called "Christians" whose lives are indistinguishable from the lives of those around them, fail to visit their spiritual home regularly.

The book of Daniel, then, establishes in its opening chapter, who Daniel is and who he will always be. *2Co 5:20 Now then we are **ambassadors** for Christ.* Next, having established his faith, he establishes his credentials as he interprets the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Yet this is no easy task since Nebuchadnezzar will not tell anyone what his dream was. *Dan 2:4 Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation. Dan 2:5 The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill.* This is a clever ploy by the king and it elevates Daniel above all the others

because only the Creator could have revealed this knowledge. Also, only Nebuchadnezzar was the only one who already knew the dream.

It is at this point in Daniel where we begin to unfold the wider scope of human history. God at work not just in Israel but in the world at large. God who raises up men and casts them down again. These kingdoms are shown in the image of the dream, I will call him the “dream man”, because that is what he will always be. The dream is of a sinful man and his desire for authority over humanity and it is a wicked dream, *1Jn 5:19 And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.*

The “dream man” represents the empires yet to come who will all be destroyed by that STONE made without hands, Jesus Christ. If you think about it, we are looking at the interaction of two kingdoms and only two kingdoms. As a fish rots from the head downwards so the “dream man” decays from the head of Gold to the feet of clay.



Nebuchadnezzar’s empire is the golden head, followed by the breast of Silver (Medo Persia), thighs of bronze (Greeks), legs of iron (Rome) and feet of clay (those to come afterwards). This is a composite kingdom and it is a single body. Mark that. These empires are all linked in their conflict with the “stone carved without hands”. This shows the nations against Christ and I will venture to suggest that the remainder of the prophecy of Daniel continues this theme. It is about human history and the triumph of the Son of Man, it reveals the Principalities and Powers behind the human thrones and the lesson all these kings had to learn, *Dan 5:21 ..... till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will.*

We have next, the response of Nebuchadnezzar to his dream. He declares himself to be God. He makes a complete statue of gold and issues a decree to worship it, which the young men refuse to do. Nebuchadnezzar is humiliated but made subservient to the God of heaven who delivers the young men from the furnace, which is a type of man made hell. Nebuchadnezzar is then revealed as the beast he is and his reign draws to a close. Nebuchadnezzar is learning just who is in charge but it takes another event to convince him.

It comes to pass after he parades on the walls of Babylon and boasts of how his power created the domain which he surveys. In that moment he is made into a beast. All men without God, through their sinful nature are at heart beasts. Nebuchadnezzar recovers, repents and to all appearances is converted. His ‘grandson’ though, did not learn the lesson and in one night, Balshazzar, having brought out the holy vessels sacked from the Temple, the very instruments that typified Christ, starts to profane them. The writing as they say, was on the wall and he disappears from history.

Chapter 6 of Daniel is about the triumph of faith, Daniel’s faith in Daniel’s God. Although better remembered for the incident in the Lion’s den, it might best be summarised *Dan 6:10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave*

***thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.*** For Daniel, nothing in this world would change his routine with heaven.

A lady once asked John Wesley, that suppose he were to know that he would die at 12:00 midnight tomorrow, how would he spend the intervening time. He replied, "Why madam, just as I intend to spend it now. I would preach this evening at Gloucester, and again at five tomorrow morning; after that I would ride to Tewkesbury, preach in the afternoon, and meet the societies in the evening. I would then go to Rev. Martin's house, who expects to entertain me, talk and pray with the family as usual, retire to my room at 10 o'clock, commend myself to my heavenly Father, lie down to rest, and wake up in Glory". Like Daniel, Wesley had a routine with Heaven.

It is from this point forward in Daniel chapter 7 that the narrative of Daniel changes and we begin to see the prophetic visions for the latter days. The language changes from what has been clear, to now, a language shrouded in mysterious terms which is similar in its representations to the book of Revelation. It is as if a veil has been pulled across the future to reveal only the smallest part of what is to become. Yet the message has not changed.

I will speculate as to what I think has happened to create this change in the language. I believe that in the earlier chapters we were seeing historic events from an earthly human perspective, whereas here in the later chapters we are seeing them from a heavenly perspective. The visions and dreams that Daniel interprets in the early chapters belong to fallen men. The later visions and dreams are those given to Daniel, a believer. The early dreams and visions see world history from a human perspective whereas Daniel sees the activities from a Divine perspective<sup>19</sup>.

Daniel has lived his life in captivity, and as he sees the captivity draw to a close, he realises that the nation of Israel has shown no repentance. *Dan 9:2 In the first year of his reign I Daniel **understood by books the number of the years**, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. Dan 9:3 And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: Dan 9:4 And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; Dan 9:5 **We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments:** It was the consequence of SIN.*

Daniel undertakes a marvellous thing. He intercedes for the nation. *Dan 9:13 We have not escaped any of the terrible curses written by Moses, and **yet we have refused to beg you for mercy and to remind ourselves of how faithful you have always been.*** CEV. Now there is no other place where it is clearly recorded that the nation of Israel repented of their sin that caused their captivity, namely their land sabbath breaking. Of course, the Jewish church band, the harpists had their nose set out of joint, but it didn't lead to repentance, *Psa 137:1 By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. Psa 137:2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.* Self pity is not repentance, penance does not work reconciliation. You will see this is a trait common in churches. They will moan about their personal discomfort but they will miss, deliberately

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<sup>19</sup> I have not discussed the fact that the book of Daniel is not linear. By that I mean that once we get past chapter 6, the visions of Daniel move back in time (to Belshazzar) and then forward again in time.

or through ignorance, the association with sin. They carry the mantra with them “but surely we are good people”. He who was to come, saw clearly through the “generation of vipers”.

As soon as Daniel understands the Prophet Jeremiah, he intercedes for the nation. He undertakes the role of the high Priest, yet Daniel was of the tribe of Judah. *Dan 1:6 Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:* Was Daniel anticipating the role of his future tribal descendant Jesus?

I close with this observation. There is nothing in the visions of the Kings of Babylon or Persia that shows the nation of Israel restored to its former earthly glory. There is nothing in Daniel’s visions to show that Israel is restored. There is a kingdom, it is not a millennial kingdom, it is an eternal kingdom. *Dan 7:13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. Dan 7:14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. Amen!*

## Chap 26. The Olivet discourse – 6. The 70 year sin

I remind you that we are trying to understand the phrase “abomination of desolation” that Jesus uses to fix the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. *Mar 13:14 But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains:* To understand this we have tried to get an overview of Daniel’s prophecy and we have seen that there are two basic elements to the prophecy. Firstly, the prophecies and events in the lives of the Kings of Babylonia, Media and Persia. Secondly, the prophecies and events in the life of Daniel. I also suggested that in this, there were two views, a world view from man’s viewpoint and a world view from God’s view point.

We also noted that the nation of Israel/Judah, despite the captivity, had not as a body, repented from its sins. If you read the contemporary prophets, Ezekiel, Haggai and Zechariah, you will observe that the nation of Israel are still rebellious, *Eze 2:3 And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day. Eze 2:4 For they are impudent children and stiffhearted.* Such was the depth of sin in Israel and Judah that the prophet Ezekiel pronounces that **they were beyond intercession**, *Eze 14:13 Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it: Eze 14:14 Though these three men, Noah, **Daniel**, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD.*

Daniel, as we saw, eventually began to understand the meaning of the captivity. *Dan 9:2 In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish **seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.*** This was something that would be repeated, as he is later shown, in the future and would

be associated with the Messiah. Now why did such a great man as Daniel not understand this? I will suggest a number of reasons. He was a boy when he was taken captive. Of his family we know nothing but judging by the apostate times he lived in, Bible study was not popular. Like us in our godless generation, it has taken some of us years to uncover the depths of scripture. So I doubt that Daniel's knowledge of scripture was too deep at the start but he set his face to learn.

Daniel also learned that while there was an earthly king of Persia, there was also a prince of Persia engaged in a battle with the archangel Michael. *Dan 10:12 Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. Dan 10:13 But **the prince of the kingdom of Persia** withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there **with the kings of Persia**. Dan 10:14 Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.* This power behind the throne, this principality had hindered Daniel from understanding the vision for the latter days, presumably for the three weeks that Daniel was fasting.

As we delve deeper, we see the nature of the conflict as the angel explains. *Dan 11:1 You also need to know that **I protected and helped Darius the Mede** in his first year as king.* CEV. Why would the Angel of Israel protect the king? What did he need protecting from? It was not just this angel who spoke to Daniel but also Michael the archangel. *Dan 10:13 But **the prince of the kingdom of Persia** withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I **remained there with the kings of Persia**.* We are looking at the power behind the thrones of this world.

As our Creator unfolds history, He does so through the agencies of Principalities, Powers and Rulers of the darkness of this world. Causality, what makes things happen, is not limited to the physical laws of this Universe. There are invisible elements which are not subject to these laws. *Col 1:16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, **visible and invisible**, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.* We see particularly in the ministry of Christ that many of the physical sicknesses were the result of these invisible powers influencing the lives of individuals. Deafness, blindness, dumbness, paralysis and so on can all have an underlying unnatural, spiritual cause. I would not expect that this type of manifestation could be treated by natural medicine.

You cannot understand the state of this world without understanding first, the spiritual realm which exists and is in conflict with it. These principalities influence human history. It is my belief that given the opportunity, they would bring hell on earth in an instant, they would destroy all vestiges of humanity, they would blind all men to the saving power of Christ. Unprotected from these powers, mankind would be totally annihilated. The elect angels stand against these evil powers to limit their capability and thus guide the eternal purpose of God in Christ Jesus to His desired conclusion. I think that this is the sort of restraint that the Apostle Paul speaks of. *2Th 2:7 For the mystery of lawlessness already works. Only there is one who restrains now, until he is taken out of the way.* WEB.

Where is the battleground of the Principalities and Powers? *Rev 12:7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, Rev 12:8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. Rev 12:9 And the great dragon*

was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Now these angels cannot die, so they cannot inflict fatal injuries on each other and it is not a carnal warfare. *Luk 20:36 Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.* The fight is conducted in the realm of men and especially in their minds and that is in part why “in Christ”, our minds need refurbishing.

In answer then as to, “Why would the Angel of Israel protect the king”? “What did he need protecting from?”, I suggest that it was to protect the king from those evil powers that would oppose the restoration of the Jews after the 70 years and prevent him from making his declaration of freedom to return. *Ezr 1:1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing.* They failed.

We might also understand by this that Principalities and Powers would hinder our understanding of future events, that they would burden us by ignorance. How sad then they they have for the most part, succeeded in our day and age. We have prophetic opinion from people who do not make any attempt to study the subject. For many, that “study”, if it occurs is based upon the easy reading, sensationalist novels that have more in common with an action movie than the sacred word of God.

So where are we? Daniel has seen the unified kingdoms of the world in the vision of Nebuchadnezzar’s “dream man”, the kingdoms that would come before the Messiah. They are all united and related by their opposition to the Creator. They will all be broken by the Messiah’s kingdom, the rock carved without hands. Daniel’s revelation is progressive and grows in detail over the years as the “dream man” is identified as the coming kingdoms of earth. Daniel is finally shown that a period of 70 “weeks” is determined to the time of Messiah. *Dan 9:24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Dan 9:25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.* It should not have escaped our notice that this revelation is given at the same time that Daniel is given the understanding of the 70 years. I strongly suspect that there is a connection between the two 70’s.

*Dan 9:2 In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.* I do not intend to try and interpret the Seventy weeks as a period of time derived by multiplying 70 x 7 and converting it to years. There is no reason to make that arbitrary calculation. In fact I must point out that the word “weeks” does not even appear in the original.

Now it seems to me that the only version that tries to make an accurate stab at translating Daniel 9 v 24, is the Apostolic Polyglot Bible. *Dan 9:24 Seventy periods of seven were rendered concise upon your people.* It is literally “Seventy Sevens”. The LXX version says ἑβδομήκοντα ἑβδομάδες (seventy hebdomads), seventy weeks, the Hebrew is less clear. If it were 70 weeks, it could have been clearly stated. The lack of clarity should move us away from trying to understand it as a human time scale rather to see it as a symbolic number. We should be asking ourselves what is the significance of this

70 periods of seven, in the light of Daniel's discovery of the 70 years of the captivity? To understand this we need to consider if the number 70 has any spiritual significance?

The 70 years of captivity was a punishment for disobedience regarding the law of the land Sabbath. The number 70 appears to be associated with judgement and oppression. *Psa 90:9 For **all our days** pass away **in Your wrath**; we finish our years like a murmur. Psa 90:10 **The days of our years are seventy**; and if any by strength live eighty years, yet their pride is labor and sorrow; for it soon passes, and we fly away.* LITV. Seventy years, a life sentence, so to speak.

Let us consider the nature of Daniel's 70 periods of 7. As I have suggested, it is linked to the revelation to Daniel of the meaning of the 70 years. Although the captivity of 70 years might be over, God's people are **not delivered** from the spiritual oppression around them. Daniel is made aware of the conflict between the prince of Persia and Michael the prince of Israel. *Dan 10:21 But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but **Michael your prince**.*

This new period of 70 follows **because iniquity has not been fully dealt with**. *Dan 9:24 "Seventy weeks are decreed on your people and on your holy city, **to finish disobedience, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy.**"* WEBA. We must not forget that **the Babylonian captivity was not a punishment for the general sin of Israel but for a specific sin**, the sin of failing to keep the land Sabbath. We might ask why was this one, the land Sabbath, singled out as so great a sin, so bad, or the only bad one? Well, I do not think that it was.

There were of course many other sins that were outstanding. Take for example the year of release, *Deu 15:1 At the end of **every seven years thou shalt make a release**. Deu 15:2 And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD'S release.* Then there was the release from slavery *Exo 21:2 If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the **seventh he shall go out free for nothing**. Exo 21:3 If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him.* This took place at the feast of Tabernacles *Deu 31:10 And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles.*

Jeremiah who foretold the 70 years also showed that they failed to observe the year of release and reneged on a promise. *Jer 34:13 Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondmen, saying, Jer 34:14 **At the end of seven years let ye go every man his brother an Hebrew**, which hath been sold unto thee; and when he hath served thee six years, thou shalt let him go free from thee: but your fathers hearkened not unto me, neither inclined their ear. Jer 34:15 And ye were now turned, and had done right in my sight, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbour; and ye had made a covenant before me in the house which is called by my name: Jer 34:16 **But ye turned and polluted my name**, and caused every man his servant, and every man his handmaid, whom ye had set at liberty at their pleasure, to return, and brought them into subjection, to be unto you for servants and for handmaids. Jer 34:17 Therefore thus saith the LORD; **Ye have not hearkened unto me, in proclaiming liberty**, every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbour: behold, I*

*proclaim a liberty for you, saith the LORD, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.*

I draw your attention to that proclamation of liberty. I am going to suggest that not only had the people of Israel failed to keep the land Sabbath but that they also had failed to keep “the year of release”. They had not released their slaves. Ever since they entered the land of Israel, this was amongst many other sins that cried to heaven. I would associate this with the 70 periods of seven or “Seventy weeks”. The 70 years rest, the land Sabbath, is the lesson that Israel had no automatic right to the land of Israel but that it was God’s, they were tenants on it and the tenancy was conditional. Israel did not own the land. The seventy periods of seven (the so called seventy weeks) suggests to me that the people of the land were God’s and that any ownership of men was limited and conditional. God owned the people and He wanted them delivered.

Israel and its people had often been in bondage but this I suggest was symbolic of their greatest bondage, the bondage to sin and death. It is this that was at the heart of the Saviour’s ministry. *Heb 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; Heb 2:15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

I focus on this year of release because it is the starting point of the Messiah’s ministry. In the synagogue at Nazareth, the Nazarene declared liberty. *Luk 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, Luk 4:19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. Luk 4:20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. Luk 4:21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.* The words of the prophet Isaiah call over the centuries to their fulfilment in Nazareth. This I suggest marks the approach to the end of the “Seventy Sevens” of Daniel.

The nation will continue its dispersion and it will be under the rule of the nations shown to Daniel in the symbol of Nebuchadnezzar’s “dream man”. The liberation of the people of God will arrive with the Messiah. *Dan 9:24 "Seventy sets of seven time periods have been assigned for your people and your holy city. These time periods will serve to bring an end to rebellion, to stop sin, to forgive wrongs, to usher in everlasting righteousness, to put a seal on a prophet's vision, and to anoint the Most Holy One. GW.*

The 70 weeks is a symbolic period of time between the end of the captivity, that is, the end of the 70 years and the completion of the Messiah’s work. It is certainly not a literal period. *Dan 9:26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. Dan 9:27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.* There is a lot of desolation there and it marks the end of the Old system of worship!



Now I hope that we can see the substance of the Prophet Daniel's prophecy. It is focused upon the Messiah. It looks to the times of Christ. It is about the triumph of Christ and although it touches on the last judgement, it is primarily about the period between the captivity and the Messiah. Prophecy, I remind us is about Jesus. Remember the prophetic principles that we established earlier and that first principle: **The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy** (Rev 19:10). Daniel sees the Messiah at the heart of his prophecy and so should we.

## Chap 27. The Olivet discourse – 7. The abomination of desolation

We have spent time looking at the life of Daniel through his prophecy and we have observed that his message and that of his contemporaries, Ezekiel, Zechariah and Haggai was not to a repentant nation, it was to a people, who, despite their chastisement, continued to provoke the Lord by their sin. They were, in short, unrepentant. We must disabuse ourselves of the notion that Israel was a godly nation, suffering the occasional apostasy by a few evil men. To the contrary, it was in the mass, a rotten and unfaithful people. Ezekiel draws attention to the fact that even when in Egypt, they were stuck in idolatry, *Eze 20:6 In the day that I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands: Eze 20:7 Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and **defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. Eze 20:8 But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.***

Having identified the theme of Daniel we are now in a position to consider the nature of the “desolation” that both he and Jesus speak of. In fact, it seems to me that there may be more than one desolation. We might see the death of Christ and the tearing of the veil as desolating the sanctuary *Dan 9:26 And after threescore and two weeks **shall Messiah be cut off**, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war **desolations are determined.** Dan 9:27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and **in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease**, and for the overspreading of abominations **he shall make it desolate**, even until the consummation, and that determined **shall be poured upon the desolate.***

The Messiah is “cut” after 69 weeks. It is an interesting word to use because it is often associated with making a covenant or agreement. *Exo 34:27 And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made (**lit. cut**) a covenant with thee and with Israel.* We talk of cutting a covenant because of the process of making a covenant. The sacrifices were killed and association with them made by walking among the parts. *Gen 15:9 And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. Gen 15:10 And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not. Gen 15:11 And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.....Gen 15:17 And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. Gen 15:18 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram.*

When Messiah makes a new covenant, the old sacrifice and hence the Old Covenant cease, and the city and the sanctuary are made a desolation. As far as Judaism was concerned, sacrifice had no value after the death of Jesus on the Cross. Both the Temple and Jerusalem of earth would cease to be significant. The temple, as we have already seen, would be realised in the person Jesus Christ. Heaven and Jerusalem would be above and no longer below, on earth and in bondage. I hope that you see now the importance of getting our definitions ordered at the start.

The desolations signal the transition of covenants and the end of the old system of worship. The 70 periods of 7 are coming to a conclusion.

If you consider the nature of the warnings or signs that Jesus describes, they are given to help the believers through the difficult days ahead. We are not so much to stand gawping as the stones fall down, spectators of the events, rather we are encouraged to preserve both our body and soul by heeding Jesus words. *Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.*

The abomination of desolation		
<p><i>Mat 24:15 When ye therefore shall see <b>the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet</b>, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:16 <b>Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:</b></i></p>	<p><i>Mar 13:14 But when ye shall see <b>the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet</b>, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let <b>them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains:</b></i></p>	<p><i>Luk 21:20 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know <b>that the desolation thereof is nigh.</b></i></p> <p><i>Luk 21:21 Then let <b>them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains;</b> and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.</i></p>

The “Abomination of Desolation” signals a warning to get out of Judaea. The three Gospel accounts appear to have been written before AD 70 and there is no mention of the destruction of Jerusalem in any of the NT documents. The destruction of Herod’s Temple was around 40 years after the Crucifixion and it is to this we suggest that Jesus is pointing us.

We have also suggested that Matthew wrote to those with a Jewish background. Mark it is supposed is a record of Peter’s experiences (I will let you go in to that) and hence there are some Jewish undertones in there. Luke is writing an account to the Greeks, directing it to one, ‘Theophilus’. Why I am saying this is because the information in Matthew’s account, citing Daniel’s prophecy, would perhaps mean very little to the gentile Greeks in the early church. I would also guess that the prophecy of Daniel means little to most Christians today, whose understanding is probably limited to Daniel in the Lions den and not much more.

For this reason, Luke’s account is a little simpler in terms of the events. You do not have to be a theologian or doctor of the law to understand what Luke is saying. *Luk 21:20 And when ye shall see **Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.*** *Luk 21:21 Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.* Thereby we see that the Gentile

Christians are in no way disadvantaged from interpreting the impending disaster. In fact, if you look again at the desolations mentioned in Daniel 9 verses 26 to 27, you will see that the destruction of the City and the Sanctuary are mentioned under this heading.

I think that we might all assume that if we saw a great army surrounding a city it would be right to assume that we would suffer a great loss. In fact by that time it would be too late to do anything about it and you would have little chance to escape. Let me correct this idea by looking a little closer at the words. The word translated armies (στρατόπεδον = stratopedon) means a camping ground. Training areas were a common feature in Greek settlements where every citizen was expected to play a part in warfare. These camps, forts and 'stratopedon' prepared citizens, professional soldiers and mercenaries for the realities of the battlefield. It taught them how to follow orders, form up, and move as a phalanx, and to defend themselves and each other as a cohesive unit.

A better translation is *Luk 21:20 'And when ye may see Jerusalem surrounded by encampments, then know that come nigh did her desolation; YLT.* The Roman armies would not just march straight into a battle. There would be the logistics associated with a possible siege, provisioning for an army, preparation of the groundwork, and pre-battle training. In other words, there would be a time interval between the army arriving and the attack on the city. This window of opportunity allowed believers to escape the desolation to come.

<p><i>Mat 24:17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:19 And <b>woe unto them that are with child</b>, and to them that give suck in those days!</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:20 But <b>pray ye that your flight be not in the winter</b>, neither on the sabbath day:</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:21 <b>For then shall be great tribulation</b>, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.</i></p>	<p><i>Mar 13:15 And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house:</i></p> <p><i>Mar 13:16 And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.</i></p> <p><i>Mar 13:17 But <b>woe to them that are with child</b>, and to them that give suck in those days!</i></p> <p><i>Mar 13:18 And <b>pray ye that your flight be not in the winter</b>.</i></p> <p><i>Mar 13:19 <b>For in those days shall be affliction</b>, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.</i></p> <p><i>Mar 13:20 And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.</i></p>	<p><i>Luk 21:22 For these be the <b>days of vengeance</b>, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.</i></p> <p><i>Luk 21:23 But <b>woe unto them that are with child</b>, and to them that give suck, in those days! for <b>there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people</b>.</i></p> <p><i>Luk 21:24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.</i></p>
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What would you do if you were warned of an impending catastrophe? What attitude should we cultivate? Take Noah for example. What did he do when he was warned of a disaster? Did he sit about for years, adopt a "do nothing" attitude? Not at all, *Heb 11:7 By faith Noah, being warned of*

God of things not seen as yet, **moved with fear**, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. He was moved to do something and he was moved with fear. He took it seriously right from the start and most importantly he acted.

Now put yourself back in those times of the warning of desolation, back in that day. This prophecy of destruction would have been hanging over your life, perhaps for many years. I imagine for some, it would have been an obsession, continually watching the signs of the times. Others perhaps would have taken precautions and just moved out anyway, why wait until the last minute and lose everything? That is just what many did. Many had already been scattered, *Act 8:1 And Saul was consenting unto his (Stephen) death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.* This occurred about 35 years before the fall of Jerusalem.

What prayers they must have uttered that this would not happen in winter that they might be spared from distress and affliction, even that they might not have a child depending upon them. I wonder whether the uncertain times that the early church lived in put particular constraints on their lives? Far away in Corinth, Paul writes, *1Co 7:26 I suppose therefore that this is good for the **present distress**, I say, that it is good for a man so to be. 1Co 7:27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. 1Co 7:28 But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned.* Paul writes, 15 years before Jerusalem falls, that perhaps marriage was not such a good thing under the circumstances of their day? It was not a command not to marry, it was advice that there are times not to do things. *Ecc 3:1 To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: ..... Ecc 3:5 A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; **a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing**;* Certainly, the times coming upon Jerusalem were going to be distressful.

I would also point out, that the watchfulness encouraged upon that generation, to observe the signs of the times, has not been removed from our generation. Like the men of Issachar, we need to understand our times to know what to do. *1Ch 12:32 And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, **to know what Israel ought to do**; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment.* We are to be watchers (Gregory's, for so the word means). *1Th 5:2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 1Th 5:3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. 1Th 5:4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. 1Th 5:5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. 1Th 5:6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; **but let us watch and be sober.***

Eventually, the day came. In the year 66 AD the Jews of Judea rebelled against their Roman masters. In response, the Emperor Nero dispatched an army under the general Vespasian to restore order. By the year 68, resistance in the northern part of the province had been eradicated and the Romans turned their full attention to the subjugation of Jerusalem. That same year, the Emperor Nero died by his own hand, creating a power vacuum in Rome. In the resultant chaos, Vespasian was declared Emperor and returned to the Imperial City. It fell to his son, Titus, to lead the remaining army in the assault on Jerusalem. The Roman legions surrounded the city and began to slowly squeeze the life

out of the Jewish stronghold. By the year 70, the attackers had breached Jerusalem's outer walls and began a systematic ransacking of the city.

Some weeks later, after the legions had assaulted the walls and gained entrance like an irresistible stream, the Romans put to the sword all Jews whom they happened to encounter. Titus desired greatly that the Temple should be spared, and promised to spare the Jews if they would stop their resistance. Several times he sent Josephus to persuade his countrymen, but the providence of God directed otherwise. First the Jews themselves set fire to the court of the temple, and afterwards the Romans. Fire consumed the buildings and the temple went up in flames. But the prophecy of the Redeemer had to be fulfilled. The destruction of the temple occurred on a Jewish Sabbath in August 70 AD.

Titus pressed the siege of Jerusalem, which was crowded with people because of the paschal festivities, cutting off the water and food supply. The besieged were hard pressed by these tactics, as well as by the insufferable heat. Those who tried to escape were captured and crucified before the very walls as an example to others. According to Josephus, such famine occurred that a mother actually ate the flesh of her own small son. He tells of 2,500,000 assembled at the last Passover just before the city was taken by Titus. 1,000,000 perished in the siege, 347,000 perished in other places. Of the remainder, 97,000 were carried into captivity and 11,000 starved through neglect or sullen refusal of food.

When Jerusalem was captured, the temple was burned and scavengers would turn over every stone to retrieve the melted gold. The Jewish people were expatriated, and never since has sacrifice been offered up to God on Jewish altars. Of those spared from death: thousands more were enslaved and sent to toil in the mines of Egypt, others were dispersed to arenas throughout the Empire to be butchered for the amusement of the public.

Eusebius, in his history, reports that an oracle of the Lord directed them to flee from Jerusalem. They fled across the Jordan river to Pella. It is said by Eusebius that not one Christian was killed in the destruction of Jerusalem. By A.D. 69, the Jerusalem church was gone entirely, gathered out of the tribulation by the Lord's word.

C.H. Spurgeon notes that "The Christians in Jerusalem and the surrounding towns and villages, "in Judea ", availed themselves of the first opportunity for eluding the Roman armies, and fled to the mountain city of Pella, in Perea, where they were preserved from the general destruction which overthrew the Jews. There was no time to spare before the final investment of the guilty city; the man "on the house-top" could "not come down to take anything out of his house", and the man "in the field" could not "return back, to take his clothes." They must flee to the mountains in the greatest haste the moment that they saw "Jerusalem compassed with armies "(Luke 21:20)."

The effect of the fall of Jerusalem was profound. The Jewish Revolt marked the end of the Jewish state until modern times. The destruction of the temple also signified a change in the Jews' worship (although that change had begun, as Jews had been scattering throughout the world for at least six hundred years). The first destruction of the temple, by the Babylonians in 586 B.C., had forced the

Jews to become people of the Book. The temple's sad end slammed the door on the Jew's sacrificial system. They adjusted, of course, creating new rituals for home and synagogue. As far as sacrifices go, the Jews were no longer a people of the book.

## Chap 28. The Olivet discourse – 8. Tribulation

You may have thought that having escaped the destruction of Jerusalem, the believers would now have peace but that is not to be. This world is not at peace and it is certainly not at peace with Christ.

Also associated with those days was “tribulation”. The word “tribulation” is derived from the Latin “tribulum”. A tribulum was an ancient Roman sledge for threshing; a broad, heavy board set with many teeth of stone or iron, still in use in northern Africa. It separated the husks from the grain. The original Greek word θλίψις = thlipsis has a similar agricultural origin and relates to squashing the grapes. Mark 13:19 in the AV for some reason translates it as “affliction” rather than tribulation but the same sense is there.

<p><i>Mat 24:21 <b>For then shall be great tribulation</b>, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.</i></p>	<p><i>Mar 13:19 <b>For in those days shall be affliction</b>, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.</i></p> <p><i>Mar 13:20 And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.</i></p>	<p><i>Luk 21:23 But <b>woe unto them that are with child</b>, and to them that give suck, in those days! for <b>there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people</b>.</i></p> <p><i>Luk 21:24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.</i></p>
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There are many who try to associate the “tribulation” spoken of here, with some future end time event, that will signal the end of the world. That however takes us right out of the immediate context of Jesus’ warning and that is, that it occurs in Judaea. *Mat 24:16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:* There you are, it is fixed geographically and this “tribulation”, *Mat 24:21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be*, is associated with the downfall of the temple. Now I am not saying that the Christian era is not an era of “tribulation” because it certainly is. I am suggesting that Jesus is talking more to what was then, the “near future” and answering the question, “**When shall these things be?**”

However, “tribulation” marks the whole Christian era, as the following texts show:

- *Act 14:22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much **tribulation** enter into the Kingdom of God.*
- *Rom 12:12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in **tribulation**; continuing instant in prayer;*

- *2Co 1:4 Who comforteth us in all our **tribulation**, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.*
- *1Th 3:4 For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer **tribulation**; even as it came to pass, and ye know.*
- *Rev 1:9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*
- *Rev 2:9 I know thy works, and **tribulation**, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.*
- *Rev 7:14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great **tribulation**, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

We live in troubled times. Creation itself groans for liberty, nations lie in despair. *Rom 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory about to be revealed in us; Rom 8:19 for the earnest looking out of the creation doth expect the revelation of the sons of God; Rom 8:20 for to vanity was the creation made subject--not of its will, but because of Him who did subject it --in hope, Rom 8:21 that also the creation itself shall be set free from the servitude of the corruption to the liberty of the glory of the children of God; YLT.*

Today, as we speak, 65 Countries are involved in wars with 654 Militias/Guerrillas and Separatist groups involved <http://www.warsintheworld.com/?page=static1258254223> . One in 9 people in the world today are suffering chronic undernourishment. Just three diseases: tuberculosis, malaria, and AIDS cause over 300 million illnesses and more than 5 million deaths each year. The world is a very troubled place but if you have not made the connection yet, there is absolutely nothing, not a mention even, of mankind being able to resolve any of the issues such as war, famine, death and disease. As we have observed before, these are just symptoms of a deeper and more sinister condition. They are the consequences of sin. They are the result of a spiritual condition exacerbated by Principalities and Powers.

Let me also make this point very clearly, in addition. It is not the role of the church to resolve those issues in society. The church is not a welfare service provider, technicians for a broken world. If the issues are to be resolved it is only through the mediation of Christ, who changes the heart of man. What needs reforming is man himself.

The church, the body of Christ, exists to serve Christ through the propagation of the Gospel, to make disciples of all nations, to teach Principalities and Powers in heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God, to mutually edify each other. The church was not created to make an end to poverty (I saw this recently pinned to a church building in Oxford) or to ban the use of nuclear weapons or to fight against climate change and so on. I am not saying that we should be indifferent to these things. I am not saying that we should not be charitable, indeed, we certainly have a duty to our less fortunate brothers and sisters. We have a God given duty to Christians in particular. Strangely, I do not see these “get rid of poverty” “Christians”, selling all they have and sharing it out with other less fortunate churches, so I assume it means that we get rid of poverty with other peoples wealth not our own? The trouble is, churches have become service providers and social services. Births, marriages and deaths, hatching, matching and dispatching.



I remind us again where the fight lays, for we wrestle not with flesh and blood but with Principalities and Powers. We are in the midst of a great war, a war that has been waged from creation, a war that spills out regularly into the realm of the visible, causing tragic conflicts and death on a huge scale. It is the war to end all wars. I remind us that we are citizens of another kingdom, a kingdom which is not of this world, for if it were, Christ would have a standing army here, but he said to another ruler Pontius Pilate, *Joh 18:36 ..... My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.* I remind us also, that this world will never be renovated because it is scheduled for demolition and along with it the works of the devil, *1Jn 3:8 ... For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*

As we have said, it is the gospel of Christ, the good news that He brings to our souls and the deliverance from sin, that changes the world around us. Do you recall the work of the evangelist Philip who went down to the city of Samaria? The scripture records, *Act 8:8 And there **was great joy** in that city.* Why? What had caused this great joy, what had this man done to bring this about? Had he arrived and improved social conditions, increased food distribution, introduced new trade and increased wages, introduced a health system, introduced care of the aged and kicked out the Romans, done all of those things politicians promise but never deliver? No, none of these things. It was the transforming power of the gospel that had changed the hearts and consequently, the outlook of these souls. Life is not changed by tampering with the externals of life, it is changed in the heart of man.

Man will fail, every time, when it comes to social change. Let us look at one lesson from the history of man's failure. The League of Nations, 1920 was an international organization, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, created after the First World War to provide a forum for resolving international disputes. The League of Nations was difficult to create. Though first proposed by President Woodrow Wilson as part of his Fourteen Points plan for an equitable peace in Europe, the United States (typically) never became a member. America has always been "good" at sorting out other countries problems but not its own.

The League was followed by the Formation of the United Nations. On January 1, 1942, representatives of 26 nations **at war** with the Axis powers met in Washington to sign the Declaration of the United Nations endorsing the Atlantic Charter, pledging to use their full resources against the Axis and agreeing not to make a separate peace. It was an organisation conceived in war, at war and selective as to which wars it fought.

Later at the Quebec Conference in August 1943, Secretary of State Cordell Hull and British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden agreed to draft a declaration that included a call for "a general international organization, based on the principle sovereign equality of all nations." An agreed declaration was issued after a Foreign Ministers Conference in Moscow in October 1943. When President Franklin D. Roosevelt met with Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin in Tehran, Iran, in November 1943, he proposed an international organization comprising an assembly of all member states and a 10-member executive committee to discuss social and economic issues. The United States, Great Britain, Soviet Union, and China **would enforce peace** as "the four policemen." Meanwhile Allied representatives founded a set of task-oriented organizations: the Food and Agricultural Organization (May 1943), the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (November 1943), the United Nations Educational,



Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, April 1944), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB, July 1944), and the International Civil Aviation Organization (November 1944).

Well, ask yourself, is the world a safer, better place with all of these organisations? Only a lunatic would suggest that it was. War, famine, death and disease are here to stay for the duration.

What sort of life, then, can a disciple of Christ expect in this world? What should our attitude be to this world? I will suggest that a believer's attitude focuses beyond this visible realm to the as yet unseen realm. *2Co 4:16 For which cause we faint not; but though our **outward man perish**, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. 2Co 4:17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; 2Co 4:18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for **the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal**.* Each day we are reminded that our exo-man, the outer man is falling apart. From the moment of birth we are declining, inexorably, daily, initially imperceptibly at first but from the late teens onward, visibly appearing and more aggressively impacting.

The vanity press, the media, obsesses on youth, youthfulness and the cult of youth. The aging matriarchs and patriarchs clamour for their lost youth, paying any price to reclaim it. Airbrushed sacks of cellulite covered in clots of make up, mutton dressed as lamb striving for a youth that will never return. Invariably looking more grotesque as the years pass. There is nothing you can do about it but if you are a Christian man or woman you can do this and you should do this. Make sure the *"inward man is renewed day by day"*. Spend time on your soul, pamper it with the Word of God, wash in the waters of life, eat the healthy diet of heaven's bread. This is the heavenly renewal, *Isa 61:3 To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, **to give unto them beauty for ashes**, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.*

We live in a tenement of the soul, a tent, a temporary dwelling as Peter observes, *2Pe 1:14 Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.* To that end we seek a far better country and that should sustain us through life into life. *Heb 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Heb 11:14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.* Let us remind ourselves of this verse each time we look in a mirror.

When will all of this come to a conclusion? *Luk 21:24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.* It will continue until the gentiles, the nations have had their day. Now, it does not say, "after that, Israel will be restored" or that something else will follow on to take the place of the nations. It doesn't say Jerusalem will stop being downtrodden. It just states that Jerusalem will be downtrodden.

If you recall Nebuchadnezzar's "dream man", it was the effigy that portrayed the gentiles, the nations of the world then and those to come, **all gentiles**. They waged war on God's people in both the Older and New Testament. The time is coming when they will face judgement. *Rev 19:13 And he*

*was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. Rev 19:14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. Rev 19:15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. Rev 19:16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, **KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.***

I wonder when it dawned on these disciples, sitting at the feet of Jesus, that the Son of Man who was speaking of these coming events, was Himself the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Lord of Creation, Lord of Life and Lord of all nations?

## Chap 29. The Olivet discourse – 9. False Christ, false Christianity

Jesus returns a second time to the subject of false Christs. It is as if He is saying to us, above all, the really important, perhaps the most important point about things to come is that you are prone to deception. What you really must be careful of are false Christs. Yet, you will find more fixation upon future events than upon false Christs. False Christs will damage you far more than falling foul of temporal disasters. It will be the biggest disaster of your life if you follow after a false Christ, in fact it will be an eternal disaster. False Christs will not only damage your health, they will kill you. It is a very important subject and we are warned more about the deception of false Christs than we are about the details of earthly end time events. What should then occupy us is that we should not be deceived by men who claim to be Christ, even if they do signs and wonders. **The history of the Christianity shows that we failed to take the warnings seriously.**

The deception		
<p><i>Mat 24:23 Then if any man shall say unto you, <b>Lo, here is Christ</b>, or there; believe it not.</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:25 Behold, I have told you before.</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:28 For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.</i></p>	<p><i>Mar 13:21 And then if any man shall say to you, <b>Lo, here is Christ</b>; or, lo, he is there; believe him not:</i></p> <p><i>Mar 13:22 For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.</i></p> <p><i>Mar 13:23 But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.</i></p>	<p><i>Luk 21:8 And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for <b>many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ</b>; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.</i></p>

The prefix “pseudo” is attached to the word Christ, so we are looking out for ‘pseudochristos’. That is, lying Christs, counterfeit Christs, deceptive Christs, false Christs. **Every book in the New Testament with the exception of Philemon**, warns vigorously against false teachers who will try to deceive God's people. It is a major, if not over-riding emphasis of many of the epistles (Colossians, Jude). Yet you will find more written on end time events than about false Christs. We are at risk from falsehood, so let us examine the ideas bound up in a “false Christ”.

A false Christ will of course offer you something and that is why people go after them. They will do signs and wonders because the devil is working in them, *Rev 16:14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty*. Such is the subtlety of the devil that the people deceived have no idea what is going on. *Mat 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Mat 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? Mat 7:23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*. They thought that they were doing it all for Jesus but they were not. It had nothing to do with Jesus.

People will do wonderful things, they will cast out devils, they will prophesy all in the name of Christ but they are not His and their works are works of iniquity. Why are these people ordered to depart from Christ? It is because He never knew them and by that same token, **they never knew Him**. How is it possible to go through a lifetime, working in religion, doing things in Christ's name, yet never knowing Him and Him not knowing them? I will suggest to you that it is because they never sought out and committed their lives to the true Christ. You may recall the story of Charles Templeton<sup>20</sup>, the contemporary of Billy Graham, a “successful” evangelist in the 1940's, a man who appeared to lead many to Christ, yet himself cast off God and reverted to become an apostate. He at one time did many wonderful things in Christ's name.

It all starts here, with our attitude to Christ. *Php 3:8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, Php 3:9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: Php 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; Php 3:11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead*.

It starts by wanting Christ, desiring Christ above all things in your life. All else is worthless dung, a complete loss, because what is worthy is that excellent knowledge of Christ. Knowing Christ is far more important than the constraints of family, friends and earthly loyalties. I am not talking about the knowledge of Bible stories, knowledge of the scriptures, the manger at Bethlehem, the Sermon on the Mount, and the Crucifixion. I am talking about the personal knowledge about the Son of God. The Jews knew the scriptures and they thought that that itself was sufficient. They thought that God would welcome them with open arms because they could quote His word. He told them in no uncertain terms, *Joh 5:38 And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye*

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<sup>20</sup> <http://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/justintaylor/2013/05/09/charles-templeton-missing-jesus/>

*believe not. Joh 5:39 Search the scriptures; **for in them ye think ye have eternal life**: and they are they which testify of me. Joh 5:40 And **ye will not come to me, that ye might have life**.*

The very object of those scriptures was lost on the Jews as it is on many religious people today. The scriptures testified of Christ but the object of that testimony was not even sought. The testimony of Jesus was the spirit of that prophecy but they could not see it. False Christs succeed because people are indifferent about the Christ of the Bible. They find their own Christ of their own making and this is their God. It is no different to making a statue of stone and worshipping it.

Now this is my point. How many churches, organisations, religious institutions encouraged you to find a personal relationship with Christ? I mean finding that relationship without their imposition of religious rituals, group approval, special guidance but to find that relationship through your own personal search. You see, the false Christs can be manufactured by religious institutions or by our own hearts. Consider for example, the child who is “christened” or “dedicated” in a religious service. They are given some hope that they are part of “the body of Christ”. Quote: “The godparents make a commitment to foster the faith received (!) by the child from the church at baptism and to assist in fulfilling those duties that are implicit in the new baptismal dignity (!) of the child, like attending church”. There you are, the child is given the idea that it is part of the church. It has been inoculated, dedicated and hypnotised, but not baptised.

I went to a Sunday school, attended church, went to Anglican and Baptist churches, had religious instruction in school and in all those years, not one person said to me that I was a dead sinner in the sight of God. No one said that I needed a personal relationship with the Saviour of the World. No one told me that I needed to be born again, to be forgiven in order to have any relationship whatsoever with God. It was always somehow assumed that I could float in and out of a relationship with God, without a second thought. It was never said that I was really separated from God by my sin. It was quite acceptable for me and God to have an occasional, on/off relationship. Yet nothing was further from the truth of scripture. I was totally deceived, totally lost and without hope.

What then is the essence of the true Christ? I will suggest to you that it is all the gifts, graces, mercies and life that the true Christ brings. You will say, “How can I know what these are?” I will tell you. They are to be found in the Word of God. Christ is defined by the scripture, who He is and what He does. The great Apollos, having been corrected in his path by Priscilla and Aquila, goes on to become a mighty witness to Christ and this is his method, *Act 18:28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, **showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ***. Now we must consider this. The scriptures were at this stage the Older Testament, the books of the New not yet having been completed. Secondly, there must have been a common knowledge of the Acts of Christ, who Christ was and what He did. The people must have been aware of this, otherwise how could they agree that “Jesus of Nazareth” fitted to the scriptures?

Likewise, the NT scriptures in turn set forth through the Gospels and Epistles, the person and work of Christ. If we go beyond this for knowledge, if we accept the philosophies of men, we have moved outside of the Biblical method of the revelation of Christ. We will be moving into the realms of the false Christs. It is through the scriptural wisdom that God educates men to believe in Christ and to be saved by Christ. *2Ti 3:15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are **able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus***. That is why Paul makes this general statement about scripture, that, *2Ti 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is*

*profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 2Ti 3:17 **That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.** And it is through this scripture that we have comfort and hope. Rom 15:4 *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and **comfort of the scriptures might have hope.****

Luke records the words of Christ given at the sermon on the plain which is similar to the Sermon on the Mount. Luk 6:46 *And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* Luk 6:47 *Whosoever cometh to me, and **heareth my sayings, and doeth them,** I will shew you to whom he is like:* Luk 6:48 *He is like a man which built an house, and **digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock:** and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.* Luk 6:49 *But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.* A Christian is a person of the Book.

There is another consequence to be found of adopting a false Christ. It is a significant one and one that I believe explains to some degree, the differences among people who call themselves “Christians”. It is this. A false Christ will create a false Christian. Faith in a false Christ will be a false faith. False Christs will bring a false Salvation, a false righteousness, a false justification and an utterly false hope.

Let me prove my assertion by defining the term “Christian”. We get our scriptural definition in the book of Acts. Act 11:26..... *And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And **the disciples were called Christians** first in Antioch.* “Christian” is a term that was applied to Disciples of Christ. A person cannot be called a Christian if they are not a disciple of Christ. That term “disciple” now requires definition. What is a disciple? Again we turn to the scripture for our definition. This is the word from Christ Himself, Mat 28:19 *So wherever you go, **make disciples of all nations:** Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Mat 28:20 **Teach them to do everything I have commanded you.** "And remember that I am always with you until the end of time."* GW.

A true Christian is a disciple who “does”, or “observes” or “guards” (τηρέω = tereo) the teachings of Christ. These teachings have been propagated in the Gospels and Epistles through the Apostles. A true Christian believes the scripture and applies it. I will go further and I am quite sure that the statement that I will make will offend people. It is this. You are not a true Christian if you do not follow the teaching of Christ. You may be religious, you may be seeking truth but you can never ever be a Christian if you deny the word of God. I am a disciple who holds to the revelation of Scripture. 2Jn 1:9 *Whosoever transgresseth, and **abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God.** He that **abideth in the doctrine of Christ,** he hath both the Father and the Son. 2Jn 1:10 *If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:* There it is, quite plainly stated by the Apostle John, that **if you do not hold the teaching of Christ, you are not a Christian.** You do not have God. If you do not abide in the teaching of Christ you do not abide in Christ.*

One of the difficulties we face today is that the term “Christian” means many different things. People call themselves Christians but do not follow the Biblical path of Bible Christians and they refuse to obey Christ in practice but still maintain the pretence. The term has today a very vague

meaning. It is better, I think, to use the term “Disciple” since that makes it very clear who the person is following.

You may say that I am uncharitable to even think this, but the words are God’s words, not mine. Of course you will say “how do you know all the teachings of Christ, who are you to state what is and what is not to be believed?” Again I point you back to my opening remarks, that **it is YOU who have to make that decision** and it is not for others to make it for you. If you have a belief, then you received it from somewhere, you heard something or you have imagined something. Well, was it founded on the Bible or man’s philosophy? You and I know people who do not follow the teachings of Scripture, what are we to make of them? Are they totally lost? That is up to God their Creator but it is clear as crystal that they are given no hope if they continue in disobedience.

I believe in the deity of Christ, the virgin birth of Christ, that Christ is the Creator, that Christ died and rose again from the dead, that Christ died for our sins, that we must be born again, that the unrepentant sinner will be punished eternally, that humanity is under the power of satan, that a man who lives and believes in Christ will never die, that anyone that believes on the Lord Christ will be saved, that sins are forgiven through the blood of Christ, that God has no place in heaven for sexually immoral people and much more. But the things that I believe are written in the scripture. I did not invent them and I do not understand them beyond their simple face value. I do not, like John Stott for example, interpret the creation of man as the selection of a favoured monkey (*homo divinus*), neither do I believe that God annihilates the wicked rather than punish them eternally as he taught.

These false teachings in turn breed false Christs. Christs that can only be explained by sinful human nature, rationalised and harmonised with current world views. Listen to this bit of gobbledegook. The Most Reverend (sic!) and Right Hon. Rowan Williams, Archbishop<sup>21</sup> of Canterbury said: “Yes; I believe that the conception of Jesus was a moment when the creative action of God produced a reality as new in its way as the first moment of creation itself. And I believe that what opened the way for this was the work of God through human history over centuries, coming to its fullest moment in Mary’s consent to God’s call. The recognition of the uniqueness and newness of Jesus is recognition of the absolute freedom of God to break **the chains of cause and effect that lock us into our sins and failures**; the virginal conception is an outward sign of this Divine freedom to make new beginnings.”

Come on. So, was it a virgin birth or not? “The chains of cause and effect that lock us into our sin” are not broken by an outward sign of this Divine freedom to make new beginnings”. It is broken by the substitutionary death of Christ on the Cross. Christ’s work is simple enough to be received by children and if we do not adopt this simple attitude we will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. *Mat 18:3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and **become as little children**, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Our heavenly Father wants simple child like trust from us His children. He does not want us deceived by the bloviators of this world, posing as teachers of Christ.

One final point. In the early church, Peter and John were taken before the Sanhedrin. The Jewish teacher Gamaliel makes an attempt at a defence for what has happened, *Act 5:38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it*

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<sup>21</sup> Not ones of these titles was given to any man by God. They are man’s terms for man’s religion.

*will come to nought: Act 5:39 But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.* Is Gamaliel right? Does the council of men always come to nought? Are the works of God, works of God because they cannot be overthrown. Is that the criteria? No. It is not about the outcome, it is about the truth of the statements the Apostles made about Jesus. Gamaliel a Jew did not examine the statements of the Apostles and the Acts of Christ against scripture. The truth was already there in front of them.

We are told that false Christs work genuine miracles and show great signs. So great are these signs that God's own people, the elect, are almost convinced by the deception. It all looks as if the false Christ is of God. How are we to know if it is of Christ or antichrist? We are again cast back on the Word of God. Christ brings God's Word, the antichrist brings lies.

*2Jn 1:7 For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. 2Jn 1:8 Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. 2Jn 1:9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. 2Jn 1:10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: 2Jn 1:11 **For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.***

## Chap 30. The Olivet discourse – 10. False Prophets, false Prophecy

We have examined false Christs and the consequential false Christians. We now turn our thoughts to consider the false prophets. *2Pe 2:1 But **there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you**, who privily shall bring in damnable (destructive) heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.* They bring destructive divisions that will destroy them. Their work will not just destroy them, it will destroy their hearers. I will put these false prophets in the class of false teacher as Peter does. The truth of his words has never been more obvious than in the last one hundred years. Here are some examples of modern false teachers.

You may recall this event, that three days after his consecration as bishop on 6 July 1984, York Minster was struck by lightning, resulting in a disastrous fire which some interpreted as a sign of Divine wrath at Bishop Jenkins's appointment. In the same year David Jenkins, the Anglican bishop of Durham, England, delighted the press, as any heretical bishop will, and gave some spectacular headlines with his denial of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Jenkins said that "the Resurrection was not a single event, "but a series of experiences." Jesus was raised up, that is, the very life and purpose and personality which was in him was continuing." Work that out!

In the 1990s the American Episcopalian Bishop Spong, infamous for his passionately held liberal convictions, saw passages in the Gospels portraying Jesus of Nazareth "as narrow-minded, vindictive, and even hypocritical," and "guilty of what we today would surely call anti-Semitism." He also made headlines when he ordained gay, lesbian and bisexual

priests in his diocese. He also favours abortions, the ordination of women, and the blessing of homosexual relationships.

In 2003, United Methodist bishop Joe Sprague of Chicago questioned the eternal deity of Christ, His virgin birth, His bodily resurrection, and His atonement for the sins of the world. The bishop may profess tolerance toward a host of anti-Christian ideas, but he has no patience with his critics. He calls them "narrow-minded," "theologically bankrupt," and tools of the "well-heeled religious right." Heresy charges against Sprague were dismissed after investigators found no reason to sustain an accusation that he had violated church doctrine, investigators concluded that Sprague was "obedient to Christ's teachings." Noting that Methodism historically has been accepting of personal differences, they suggested that a dialogue be opened between the bishop and his opponents.

Rev. Philip Blackwell, senior pastor of the First United Methodist Church/Chicago Temple, a Sprague supporter, thinks "the bishop has come to personify a profound intellectual division between traditionalists who honour every word of Scripture as binding and progressives who strongly feel that biblical narratives need symbolic interpretation". To which we must ask, what then is the truth that is hidden in symbols?

In "Gagging God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism", theologian Dr. D.A. Carson wonders how the self-confessed liberal David L Edwards, former Dean of Norwich can be called a Christian. He notes that this instructed and thoughtful theologian explicitly rejects the Fall, denies that human beings have any need for an atonement provided by a divine/human redeemer, discounts belief in the physical resurrection of Jesus, and concludes that "everything" in the Gospel of John "must be questionable." Carson rightly comments that in Edward's case, "We are not in the realm of quibbling about the precise definition of inerrancy; we are in the realm of those truths without which Christianity is no longer Christianity."

Well, we could continue our illustrations because in this age of apostasy, liberal non-biblical teaching abounds like locusts, devouring the truth of scripture to the point that the Bible will be an empty book stripped of all truth. What has happened to bring this about? It is no new thing. In March 1887, the Baptist minister Charles Spurgeon published in his monthly magazine, *The Sword and the Trowel*, an article titled "The Down Grade." The article, published anonymously but written by Spurgeon's friend Robert Shindler. It declared that some ministers were "denying the proper deity of the Son of God, renouncing faith in his atoning death...." They were, Shindler said, on a slippery slope, or "Down Grade," away from essential evangelical doctrines. The controversy was called the "Downgrade controversy".

Just how much of the truth can be removed, before the Gospel can no longer function and is not fit for purpose? Using an analogy from biology, how much of the human genome, the information and instruction set to make life, can be changed before the result is no longer recognisable as a human being? The removal or alteration of one part in 3 billion of the DNA chain, called a point mutation or a nonsense mutation, can have a devastating effect on the individual. It can not only debilitate, it can drastically shorten life expectancy. It can produce mutations and monsters. If as we believe, the Bible is the blueprint for spiritual life, *Rom 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the*



*word of God.* We cannot neglect or diminish any of it without producing monsters. It is all scripture or nothing. We cannot pick and choose.

Since scripture reveals the law of God it cannot be trivialised. *Jas 2:10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. Jas 2:11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.* It is all scripture or nothing. If we diminish the law we diminish sin, *Rom 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.* We cannot dismiss the validity of the law since law defines sin and sin is lawlessness.

The heresies that we illustrated earlier in our introduction are all aimed at undermining the importance of sin and the uniqueness of Christ. They remove the need for reconciliation with God, the need for a redeemer, they annihilate the saviour in death, they deny that God even has a true word to say about any of it because scripture was the product of ordinary mortals and prone to error, which error can only be discovered by these learned heretics. What a charade. It can no longer be called Christianity because it has none of the things of Christ. If we wanted to characterise it, because of its anti-Christian stand, I would say that it is satanism.

Now I do not think that we are looking at a false prophet or teacher as someone who just made an error, a genuine mistake or just happened to be ignorant of the truth. I think that we are dealing with **wilful ignorance**. *2Pe 3:5 For this is hidden from them by their willing it so, LITV.* They will not have the truth at any price or even consider it. We are dealing with people who will deliberately pervert the truth, *Rom 1:21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Rom 1:22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, Rom 1:23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Rom 1:24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Rom 1:25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.*

I am not saying that these people are always conscious of what they are doing, in fact, they would probably become extremely irate if you accused them of being a false prophet or teacher. Even the Apostle Peter once voiced the devil's opinion and was directly told "Get thee behind me satan". It is my contention that satan has a purpose to "change the truth of God into a lie". This is the work of Principalities and Powers and the rulers of the darkness of this world, the doctrines of devils. *1Ti 4:1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 1Ti 4:2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;* These wicked people have no conscience. It is cauterised, burned out and of no effect. They are the teachers of the devil's doctrines and are sometimes ignorant of it.

Just because someone calls themselves pastor or reverend does not mean that they are. It does not mean that they are God's gift to the churches. I wrote to a magazine back in 2012 (not that I support the Pope or the Alpha course) saying,

"I was disappointed in the Bible League Article (June 2012) on the Alpha course, to see that it was blasphemous for the Pope to be "Holy Father" but it is quite correct for the man who writes about it to take on the title "Reverend". It might be an idea to take out the splinters before tackling the planks? I do not have Ferguson's address so perhaps you can mention it to him when you see him?"

I got a reply,

"When a minister is called "Rev." it is simply a courtesy title meaning no more than that **he is a holy man or a man of God** (sic!). It also has the added advantage of assuring a suspicious world that he is not a member of some cult, and often opens doors of opportunity for witness and ministry that perhaps would be denied a less familiar Christian worker".

You see, the world has a stereotype of what a teacher of religion should look like. If the world's expectation is not met, then according to this man, this reverend, there is a loss of opportunity for the gospel. By this attitude, we are conformed to the world, something we are told not to be. *Rom 12:2 And **be not conformed to this world**: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

If it were true, if these outward appearances were what really mattered, then Jesus should have taken a lot more trouble to look like a Pharisee, worn a huge phylactery, refrained from insulting them and joined the Sanhedrin. To have been really successful, Jesus would not have become a carpenter's son, He would have become a doctor of the law, a worldly educated man. He would have been beautiful beyond imagination, not with a visage that was marred. Tall, dark and handsome like Saul of old. He would have courted favour among the rulers of Judea and perhaps among the Romans also. He would have made His death, in order to have been more acceptable, the death of a nobleman, not the death of a criminal. He would have healed everyone without exception, O! how popular He could have been. If only He had tried harder. That you see is my point. It is the "foolishness" of preaching, the "offence of the cross", that is the obstacle and the gospel does not need to be decorated to make it work. The Spirit of God, not the Spirit of man drives it into the soul. The New Birth is not the work of fine spoken, well educated evangelists, it is solely the work of God.

Jesus never asked me to make Him popular, more acceptable to sinful men, He asked me to preach Him faithfully, Christ crucified. That is why we are to contend earnestly for this faith of ours. *Jud 1:3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should **earnestly contend for the faith** which was once delivered unto the saints. Jud 1:4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Here is an example of a modern false teacher, Tim Keller, who is part of the new Calvinist movement linked to people like John Piper. Keller is a "reverend" but he is not to be trusted and I certainly would not call him "a holy man of God" but then that is the way of this weak kneed pseudo

evangelical world we live in. In a recent interview with Martyn Bashir, Keller's answered questions<sup>22</sup>. The following is an extract from the "New Calvinists" blogsite<sup>23</sup>.

His response to the question, "Is Jesus the only way to God?" is to prevaricate, for he says he can only answer a question about eternal salvation "if Jesus is who He says He is". Why, is there some doubt in his mind? But this is the point. Right here Keller could have quoted Scripture to make clear that Jesus Christ is the only way to God. He could have quoted Jesus' famous statement: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14.6). He could have quoted the apostle Peter: "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4.12). But he quoted neither text, for, as we shall see, Keller's gospel is not based on Scripture.

Keller says to be a Christian means that your soul has to 'get Jesus'. What does this mean? Is Jesus some commodity, like a bar of soap that you can 'get' from a supermarket shelf? And then he makes the remarkable statement, before a large audience, that God may have a trap door for unbelievers that "I haven't been told about"? He is surmising that God may actually have a secret way to heaven for those who do not repent of their sins and place their faith in Christ. But Keller's 'trap door' possibility is unbiblical and deeply heretical, for it implies that Christ died in vain. Christ said, "I am the Door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved" (John 10.9). "He who does not enter by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber" (John 10.1). There is only one Door to heaven, Jesus Christ.

Keller asserts that unbelievers are 'miserable' now, and in a billion years from now will still be miserable. Why? Because according to Keller, unbelievers 'will eternally shrivel'. But Scripture says that on the Day of Judgment Christ will say: "Depart from me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25.41). So unbelievers will be not only miserable, but will be cast into hell with the devil and his angels. This is the message of Scripture.

It is all quite subtle. Here is a man trying to be popular, trying to win the masses over through intellectual trickery. He has a network of churches, in fact his New York church has a membership of 5000 people. Here the comments of a former member of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York. Jonathan Cousar, who attended Keller's church for nearly 20 years, are relevant, for he has heard hundreds of Keller sermons. Cousar writes: "I went to Tim Keller's church for nearly 20 years and in fact I left just last year because of my growing concern that the church and Tim were far more liberal, theologically and ideologically than I had ever imagined." Cousar continues: "To sum up Keller's theology most succinctly, Keller says 'the primary purpose of salvation is – cultural renewal – to make this world a better place'. That statement should alarm any true evangelical or conservative Christian. And it must be understood that this one statement is central to all of Keller's teachings."

Yet as we have seen, people like Keller have been deceiving the church from the very beginning. They question God, just as the devil did, "Yea hath God said?" That is why Keller's pathetic response

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YkeKhA8BUw>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.newcalvinist.com/tim-kellers-false-gospel/>

to the question, “Is Jesus the only way to God?” is to prevaricate, for he says he can only answer a question about eternal salvation “if Jesus is who He says He is”. My friends if you doubt that Jesus is who He says he is, you are lost. Jesus IS who He says he is and the word “IF” is never part of our Gospel. Can you imagine the Apostle Paul standing up and saying, “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that IF Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that IF he was buried, and that IF he rose again the third day according to the scriptures”, how could you get direction and assurance from that? No, it is written thus:

1Co 15:3 FOR I DELIVERED UNTO YOU FIRST OF ALL THAT WHICH I ALSO RECEIVED, HOW THAT CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES; 1Co 15:4 AND THAT HE WAS BURIED, AND THAT HE ROSE AGAIN THE THIRD DAY ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES: Fact!

I know who said, “If thou be the Son of God?” The same person that said “If thou be the Son of God....I will give thee all these things if thou will worship me”.

Just before his death, Francis Schaeffer wrote ‘The Great Evangelical Disaster’ to express disappointment over the deep failure of New Evangelicalism. One of the great flaws found in New Evangelicalism was the compromise of biblical truth with the culture of its day. I believe the identical danger exists within the New Calvinism. In 1956, in a Christian Life magazine article, “Is Evangelical Theology Changing,” the principles of the New Evangelicalism were enumerated. Here is a summary of those points:

- “A friendly attitude toward secular science”
- “A willingness to re-examine beliefs concerning the work of the Holy Spirit”
- “A more tolerant attitude toward varying views on eschatology (last things)”
- “An increased emphasis on scholarship” [part of an attitude viewing fundamentalists as anti-intellectual]
- “A more definite recognition of social responsibility” [viewing fundamentalists as retreating from social and political involvement]
- “A re-opening of the subject of biblical inspiration” [a change which opened the door to question Biblical inerrancy]
- “A growing willingness of evangelical theologians to converse with liberal theologians” [finally resulting in evangelicals not seeing theological liberals as lost souls but merely misguided but well-meaning Christians].

We need to see whether the fruits of these false prophets are really godly or just rotten and evil. *Mat 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Mat 7:16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Mat 7:17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; **but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.*** The rotten fruit is the rotten teaching not works.

## Chap 31. The Olivet discourse – 11. Complacency, the disease of the churches

**The history of the church shows that we failed to seriously identify false Christs and false Prophets and Teachers.** I feel bound, because of the importance of this subject, to return to it once more. We have seen that false Christs breed false Christians and false churches, false prophets and teachers breed apostasy and destruction. Mahatma Ghandi said, “I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.” That is a very perceptive view of professing Christianity. It takes the name of Christ but presents a false Christ. Hence people see Christians as hypocrites, actors.

Is the way Christianity presents itself today a consequence of false teaching that subtly drew the church away from its original purpose and practice? You may consider that what has happened is the evolution of the church, the development of the church, becoming a more effective organisation. Is this so? If anything, the representation of the church in the world has tended to diminish because representation devolves to a few chosen individuals, leaders doing all of the work. For a start, we seem to have displaced the gifts. What happened to Christ’s gifts to the church? *Eph 4:10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; **and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;*** I was told by many people that some of these gifts had ceased to exist, based on the assumption that once the early church was established, it did not need Apostles or Prophets and that supernatural gifts, healings and miracles had also died out.

There was not one shred of biblical evidence to show that this was what God intended to do and that the Lord only gave the gifts for a very short space of time. It could equally be suggested that gifts were not present because men did not want them or believe they were necessary. Disbelief inhibits the works of Christ, *Mat 13:58 And he did not many mighty works there **because of their unbelief.*** Yet it will not have escaped your notice that the “gift” of Pastors seems to abound in this age, a miraculous survivor. However, are these genuine Pastors, genuine Gifts of God to the churches?

We live in an age of manufactured Pastors. These are manufactured in the main, through denominational allegiance or Bible College. It does not matter that scripture insists that aptitude to teach and marriage are primary requirements for leadership in the church. *1Ti 3:2 That's why officials must have a good reputation and be faithful in marriage. They must be self-controlled, sensible, well-behaved, friendly to strangers, and **able to teach.*** CEV. It must logically follow that if they have an aptitude to teach, then they must have something to teach and must be in possession of some biblical knowledge, for we are talking about spiritual not temporal leadership. No, today, it is about intellect and learning. It is about satisfying a set of manmade requirements in order to work in man made churches. It is not about God’s call and gifts because false teachers say they do not exist today.

If you look online you will find that denominations may require the candidate to have a bachelor's degree in ministry, or they may require seminary training at the master's level. Unfortunately, this would have ruled out the Apostles and Prophets of old and even our Lord. *Act 4:13 But beholding the boldness of Peter and John, and having **perceived that they are untaught and uneducated men,***

*they marvelled. And they recognized them, that **they were with Jesus**.* LITV. They were “unlettered ignoramuses”, the word translated uneducated literally meaning “idiots” (ἰδιώτης= idiōtēs). What really mattered was that they had been with the real Christ and that is really what matters today.

History will show you that when God calls a man to minister, He will equip him and that many of the greatest Bible teachers never went to a college. C H Spurgeon, Martyn Lloyd Jones, A W Tozer for example and neither did Peter or John.

There are few genuine Teachers and even fewer genuine Evangelists today which is why we revert to manmade strategies to spread the Gospel. We invent “Messy church” and the “Alpha course” to plug a gap that was the domain of the Evangelist and is now the realm of the hopeful amateur. My point is that we should be at the throne of Grace petitioning Christ to return the gifts to us? The churches do not need human inventiveness, they need an outpouring of the Spirit of God. We do not need new water sources, we need to get back to the original wells that the Philistines have blocked. *Gen 26:15 For all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth.* (IS REVIVAL AN ATTEMPT BY THE SPIRIT TO RETURN?)

How would you identify a true teacher as opposed to a false teacher? I would suggest this as an indicator. A true teacher wants to see Jesus the Christ formed and functioning in your life, in all truth. *Gal 4:19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until **Christ be formed in you**.* He preaches a full gospel, a no holds barred gospel about Jesus. *Act 28:31 Preaching the Kingdom of God, **and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ**, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.* He wants nothing less than to present you perfect to Christ, not misshapen, malformed or stunted.

A teacher wants a better YOU a more perfect you. *Col 1:28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every **man perfect in Christ Jesus**: Col 1:29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.* The teacher and his fellow servants want you and I to have the fullness of Christ. *Eph 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, **unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ**:* What is important, is not that you are entertained week by week but that you are changed week by week. That you and I praise God by reflecting Christ back to Him.

What about the “church”. Does that fulfil the function that Christ intended? Let us start by looking at how you become a member of the church. Herein lies great confusion. The term “church” is often combined with a denominational tag. The Baptist church or the Methodist church. We are led by these tags to consider that they have some credibility in the eyes of God but do they? He never set these organisations up on earth, men did, however well meaning those men were. Many of the associates within these denominations are actively hostile to the scripture and deny its basic beliefs as we observed in our last ministry. For example, within the so called Church of England there exists a wide spectrum of beliefs together with false prophets and teachers.

How do you join a “church”? Well, there are absolutely no rituals, manmade ceremonies, ancient rites, incantations, human powers or dedications that can get you into God’s church. Man’s church, yes, there are plenty of these things that can be done to make you part of a denomination but not of

God's church. Becoming part of God's church is like a marriage, it involves no men and it is solely what "God joins together". It is a spiritual union with Christ. *Eph 5:32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Col 1:18 And he is **the head of the body, the church**: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; **that in all things he might have the preeminence.***

The church is a spiritual body of people joined together in Jesus Christ. *Rom 12:4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: Rom 12:5 **So we, being many, are one body in Christ**, and every one members one of another.* We are baptised by the Spirit into that body. *1Co 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have **been all made to drink into one Spirit.** 1Co 12:14 For the body is not one member, but many.* We were immersed in the Spirit, made to drink of that Spirit and consequently, filled with that Spirit. It is not and never has been a work that man can arrange or accomplish. It doesn't matter what strategy a man invents, it must ever be of the Spirit to last.

Recognising that there are many people who do not believe the gospel and in order to try and get back to a believing church, to separate from the apostates and false teachers, other organisations are invented. We compound error. "Evangelical" Fellowships are created to mark a distinction between Bible based and non-Bible based "churches". So you create a broad coalition of denominations Baptist, Anglican, Chapel, Mission based groups who distinguish themselves from the other like named groups in their denomination. You may apply an additional tag, namely "Evangelical". You now have, for example Anglican churches and Evangelical Anglican churches. It is an attempt to apply a filter to the corrupt beliefs of denominations. Another human prop is therefore invented to shore up a previous human invention.

So then, we have moved from the classification of certain believers into denominations, which then need further definition because some within the denomination do not hold to the truth of the gospel. That in turn presents problems because how much do you have to have in common, to be group of believers? How much can we differ on in belief, before we regard ourselves in need of separation? **We are creating a new orthodoxy.**

Now herein lays the problem, to my mind. We no longer, as believers, gather together organically in this age. We are manipulated, willingly or otherwise into an organisation that will manage our religious lives, from cradle to the grave. We "join" churches, that is, we join denominations. Having then discovered that there are people in those gatherings, possibly even the minister who doesn't believe the gospel, we are forced to make a decision about our allegiance. Chances are that most people would look for an evangelical branch of the denomination rather than confront the error.

This is the warning from Paul. *Act 20:27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Act 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. Act 20:29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Act 20:30 **Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.** Act 20:31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.*

How do we counter these threats to believers, threats to the church of Christ, threats to the faith? I encourage disciples to understand where their loyalty lies. We are prone to develop loyalties to

men, *1Co 3:4 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? 1Co 3:5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? 1Co 3:6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.* We may develop a loyalty towards a denomination, perhaps because they helped us. Yet it is all too easy to lose sight of who we serve. We are servants of Christ, first, foremost and always.

You know, that as I have encouraged you over the years, I have always urged you not to believe what I put forward without proving it for yourself. I have also encouraged you to strengthen and grow that personal relationship with Christ. I encourage a healthy scepticism towards fallible men and for a good reason, *1Jn 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*

Why then do we see error abounding in the community of God's people? Two main reasons occur to me. Firstly, we are increasingly becoming biblical illiterates. We do not read God's word regularly. We do not steep ourselves in it such that our souls are pickled in the word. It was said of John Bunyan, "Prick him anywhere and he bleeds the Bible". It is because we are illiterate that we can be easily misled. One of the forces driving the translation of the Bible into our native language was the fact that the religious leaders could deceive those that they kept in ignorance. This was recognised by William Tyndale. Tyndale was engaged in a conversation with a fellow priest concerning the need for the Scriptures to be in the English language. At that time, because of the Oxford Constitutions enacted in the previous century, it was not permissible to own a copy of the Bible in the English language. Tyndale's companion was not convinced of the need for the Scriptures in English. He is reported to have said that as long as people had the Bishop of Rome's laws, the Scriptures were not needed.

To this Tyndale replied, "I defy the Pope and all his laws, if God spare my life, I will make a boy that driveth the plough know more of the Scripture than thou dost." Erasmus spoke of the weaver at his loom, the traveller on his journey and others who would be refreshed by the reading of God's Word. However, Tyndale's statement goes far beyond what Erasmus expressed. Tyndale did not only speak of the ploughboy having the Scripture in a familiar language but he also said that he would make him to know more of the Scripture than one who had been educated for the priesthood in the church. Tyndale not only had the intention of translating the Scriptures but providing a means by which a person could understand what the Scriptures meant.

The second reason that we are prone to error follows on from this and it is **the reliance on others to provide our spiritual input**. I see little difference between the Pope and a Pastor, where the person depends upon them for their total personal religious development. The responsibility lies squarely with the disciple. *Php 2:12 My dear friends, you have always obeyed, not only when I was with you but even more now that I'm absent. In the same way continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.* GW. There will be no excuses and we have ourselves to blame when we appear before Christ. **Disciples must take responsibility for their own growth in the faith.**

Now turn with me to the epistle of Jude who it is suggested was one of the four brothers of Jesus. Jude was probably written after the fall of Jerusalem. I want to make it quite clear who this letter was written to. *Jud 1:1 Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.* Now ask yourself if you consider yourself to be "A called saint, guarded in Christ Jesus". Is that what you are, because I say



that if you are not you are unsaved. Now to us, not just church leaders, older believers, Teachers, Pastors, I say that it is to US ordinary believers these words come.

*Jud 1:3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that **ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.** Jud 1:4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. **CONTEND OR COMPROMISE?** I see more compromise than contention today. It is all about keeping the peace, not upsetting people who have different views, live and let live. It is the breeding ground of error.*

It falls upon each of us to “earnestly contend” for the faith, by which we see two things. It is a personal and individual responsibility of each Christian to fight the good fight and not leave it to others. Firstly that we should not contend for modern forms of faith, new ideas, new views, we are “old faith contenders”. We contend for the old faith that was “ONCE” delivered. It was the faith of our fathers, unrevised, unchanging, that we continue to uphold. The people who arise and say that we should bring the teaching of Christ up to date, make the church relevant, get with the times, try new ways of working because things have changed over the centuries are wrong. That is certainly not what Jude says. We must contend for the faith of the early church, once delivered.

I observe, that the whole purpose of this contention was to expose the ungodly who falsify the gospel of Christ. To expose their error for what it is, in undermining the person and work of Christ. Now please think about the implications of this. If we Christians had made the effort as many have over history, had made an effort to understand “the faith” and defend it, we would not be seeing the liberalism and apostasy in the modern world. Apostates like Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons run rings around most Christians because they are bettered schooled in their error than Christians are in their truth and it comes back to this fact, that Christians just do not use their Bibles enough and the seldom study because that is left to the paid “professionals”, the churches hirelings.

In these environments that we manufacture, called denominations, we are losing the capability to minister to each other. This becomes a wonderful environment for the propagation of false Christs. Because we are too concerned about upsetting people, we do not challenge false beliefs and so they can grow in this atmosphere of darkness. Yet this is not what the Apostle sees as correct in a functioning body. *1Co 14:24 But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or **one unlearned**, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: 1Co 14:25 And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and **so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.*** The functioning body is a body that convicts people such that they will stay and worship with you or leave!

One more point and I will just perhaps open the subject. It relates to the whole topic of Christ centred worship. In the Corinthian church, the unlearned, learns and then he worships God. To which I ask, how? I am not comfortable with much that I see being passed off as worship because, in my mind, it lacks dignity in expressing the greatness of God, His attributes, His glories. You will say that it is just an age thing, that because of my age, I do not like modern music, that I am somehow locked in the past and that I would be happy walking around in a black frock coat wearing a top hat looking like a funeral director. So I ask you to ponder my question. **“How do you know what music God likes?”** Where did you get your information from? Do not say to me that because you like

something it must automatically follow that God will like it or that it is acceptable. *Eph 5:8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: .....Eph 5:10 **Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord***. We have a duty to test what is well pleasing, what is acceptable to the Lord. We have a duty to please and worship the true Christ.

## Chap 32. The Olivet discourse – 12. What music does God like?

**The history of the church shows that we failed to seriously identify false Christs and false Prophets and Teachers.** It is an important theme that cascades out into many areas of our faith. False Christs breed false Christians and false Christians breed false Christianity and the consequent falsities associated with worship. Just because God doesn't smite you dead each time you sin, doesn't mean that He approves of what you are doing. That philosophy, namely that providence contains an expression of right and wrong, is the basis of trial by ordeal. If the person floats they are a witch and if they drown they are not! It is a sinful philosophy that God's will, can be interpreted accurately through natural events. Further the idea that good always wins and evil always fails in this life was Gamaliel's flawed view as we saw.

If we are honest, we seldom ask the question **"What does my God like?"** Generally, it comes down to what we like and we serve that up thinking that it is what God likes. That little voice in our head telling us what to do is usually interpreted as "God speaking to me". It never occurs to us that we might have completely misunderstood what God likes and that we never even thought to enquire. We mostly serve up what we think "our Christ" wants, not what we know He wants. We are probably serving a false Christ most of the time. I was listening to a very muddled view of homosexuality the other day. A person was asked what they thought about homosexuality, a trick question posed by the interviewer to try and classify the interviewee. The gist of the dialogue was that God is love, we are to love our neighbours, hence we are to love homosexuals and it follows that God must love them too. Well it doesn't matter what you and I think but it certainly matters what God thinks. Did you ever ask?

It is quite clear that there are people of this homosexualist persuasion who want a relationship with God. They would even tell you that they loved God and wanted to worship Him, not of course that they wanted to make any great changes in their lifestyle choice because 'god' is inclusive. They wanted to be homosexualist Christians. They wanted to worship God on their terms. Now I asked myself that question again in respect of this. "What sort of people does God like for company?" Does He want homosexuals as His best friends? The answer is a resounding NO. God has no place for them in that state, He does not share His heaven with them, *1Co 6:9 Don't you know that **evil people won't have a share in the blessings of God's kingdom?** Don't fool yourselves! No one who is immoral or worships idols or is unfaithful in marriage or is a pervert or behaves like a homosexual 1Co 6:10 will share in God's kingdom. Neither will any thief or greedy person or drunkard or anyone who curses and cheats others. 1Co 6:11 Some of you used to be like that. But now the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the power of God's Spirit have washed you and made you holy and acceptable to God.* CEV.

Do you notice that these behaviours are all lumped together? They are all in the same basket without distinction. There is no difference between a drunk and a fornicator in the eyes of God. He

has no place for either. I am sure that a homosexual does not want to be put in the same category as a drunk or a thief or a cheat but there they all are, all there together. Just so that we do not miss the point the list is repeated twice (1Cor 5 and 6). We all fitted one of those categories, maybe more than one but we have been changed by the power of God's Spirit. We have been made acceptable in the beloved. You see, it must be possible for these behaviours to be changed by Christ. **1Co 6:11 And such were some of you.** We are no longer those people because the Lord is changing our lives to make them fit company for heaven. It must follow that if you do not want to change, you do not want to be what Christ wants you to be and you will not be with Him in glory. In which case you are following after a false Christ, you reject the word of God and you serve your own god.

We have also been told that just as the Lord does not want the company of those "evil people", He doesn't want us to have them as close company either. **1Co 5:11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.** They are not good for you. Error can thrive in the churches if we contradict the Lord and accept the people that propagate error in their lifestyle. Do not socialise with these people, if you do, you are sinning. So if we approached the question of lifestyle choices from the position of "What people does God like?" we have some very straight and unambiguous answers<sup>24</sup>.

I asked you last time to ponder my question. **"How do you know what music God likes?"** I had a strange thought that Sundays must be a time when thousands of churches start broadcasting their music to God, their worship and praise. The ether is filled with song. I wondered whether He tuned through the stations and pushed the "off" button on some of them. Perhaps the churches who let one person dominate the music and praise, repeating their top ten favourite hymns week after. Or perhaps the amateur player, the sweet old lady who grinds the old pedal organ to death each week. Does God like the TV programme "Songs of Praise", is it worship? What does God like? What pleases the ear of God?

I read that In Dr Lloyd Jones first ministry in Aberavon, Wales, some of the things he did were "to scrap the choir and abolish the anti drink Temperance League—alcoholics did indeed go on to give up their drunken ways but through being converted and not via well-meaning middle-class good works.....societies and choirs and all the usual paraphernalia of well-intentioned but spiritually lifeless churches could never effect the inward change that conversion brings. To him the clear proclamation of the gospel was all that mattered. God honoured that commitment as the Welsh spiritual equivalents of Saul of Tarsus were gloriously saved and transformed". He of course is not authority but I use the illustration to show that people in churches propagate institutions, things that they never developed themselves and seldom question the validity of what they do nor if God likes them. This is true today with churches engaged in all manner of social activities that the NT and subsequent generations of believers never knew.

Let us define "Worship" before we go any further. What is worship? Worship is in essence submission, prostration before God. (נחש = shâchâw to depress, that is, prostrate in homage to royalty or God). **Gen 22:5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I**

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<sup>24</sup> We did not come to the faith by our own intelligence or by our own decision; it was by the illumination of the Holy Spirit that we believe what we do. It is not so much that Christians come to hold convictions, but rather that convictions laid hold on them. This means that where the Holy Spirit is grieved, convictions will weaken or even be lost.

and the lad will go yonder and **worship**, and come again to you. Of course, Abraham's worship was not just bowing the body before God, it was bowing the mind and the will before God, it was doing what he feared most to do. His worship was prepared to sacrifice his most treasured possession. Most of us give up very little to worship but worship is an attitude of total commitment to the Creator, a life, as the hymn writer put it, "consecrated, ALL to thee".

It has been said that the highest form of worship is speechless. *Zec 2:13 Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.* I think that if we were truly exposed to the glory of the living God, we would be more likely to gasp and inhale, rather than breathe out. We would lack the ability to express ourselves. Yet as we see, praise and song are also part of that worship. *Exo 15:20 And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. Psa 150:1 Shout praises to the LORD! Praise God in his temple. Praise him in heaven, his mighty fortress. Psa 150:2 Praise our God! His deeds are wonderful, too marvelous to describe. Psa 150:3 Praise God with trumpets and all kinds of harps. Psa 150:4 Praise him with tambourines and dancing, with stringed instruments and woodwinds. Psa 150:5 Praise God with cymbals, with clashing cymbals. Psa 150:6 Let every living creature praise the LORD. Shout praises to the LORD! CEV.*

Is that it? Just sing and praise as you please, play your musical instruments week by week, praise by PowerPoint? Look at the words of our Lord. *Mat 15:8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. Mat 15:9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.* Empty worship is the result of an empty heart. It must be clear straightway that worship is founded upon obedience. Disobedient people, people who do not observe the doctrines of Christ cannot worship Him. They can go to church, sing choruses, clap hands, dance and sway, all to no avail. They pay "lip service" but that is not what God wants. You may not like the word "doctrine" or "teaching" but that is the word Jesus uses and that is the foundation of obedience and the basis of worship.

This is nowhere better illustrated than in the book of Samuel where the prophet chastises King Saul for his disobedience. You recall the story, how Saul wanted to sacrifice an offering to God. He had collected the spoils of battle, the best animals and sacrificed them to God. God was not pleased because He had already informed Saul that he was to destroy everything. *1Sa 15:22 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. 1Sa 15:23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.* Saul was not cut down on the spot but he lost the crown and the Kingdom and eventually his life. Saul thought that he was worshipping but he was wrong.

What was wrong with Saul's worship? There can be no doubt at that time God encouraged animal sacrifice as a lesson in substitutionary atonement, also that God encouraged worship. Yet that sacrifice and worship is always tempered by other considerations. For example, not every animal was suitable for sacrifice. Sacrifices were offered through the priesthood, not by ordinary citizens. Saul was one of those people that wanted to impress God. Perhaps he thought to surprise God with his thoughtful plan, like Jehu, he wanted to show his zeal for the Lord. Many think that they are like this Saul, on such good terms with the Lord that He will look the other way when someone goes

against His word. That my friends, is how we begin to invent all manner of festivals and activities. That is how we develop false teachings. Whose voice did they hear in their head?

Saul desperately wanted to please God, of that there is little doubt but he wanted to please God in his own way. He wanted to worship God without any reference to what God wanted. It is like someone knowing what your favourite food is but deciding to try and please you with something you dislike. Rather than please God it will anger God and that will have consequences. Saul would have worshipped acceptably by doing nothing! Yes, he would have shown the Lord true respect and “worthship” if he had done nothing other than obey.

We know that worship is a very sensitive issue with God. *1Co 11:29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, **eateth and drinketh damnation** to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 1Co 11:30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.* It can be a matter of life and death. That is my point, worship has some very strict rules and must always be accompanied by a repentant heart. We must be in a “worthy” state before we start to worship. Going through the motions when there is sin present brings judgement. Is it not best to abstain? Would not the same be true of praise and worship?

Take the example of Nadab and Abihu, *Lev 10:1 And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not.* They offered fire which had not been taken off of God’s altar of sacrifice. A small mistake you might think but their hearts were in the right place surely? No, their hearts were not in the right place at all. If your heart is in the right place, it will do the right thing. Theirs was not and it was an instant death sentence. *Lev 10:2 And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. Lev 10:3 Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spake, saying, **I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.*** You see, it was not so much about the offering as the offerer. The Lord wanted to be “sanctified in them that come nigh”. What does that mean? It means that God wants the people who serve Him to be Holy. That holiness is shown in the way that they approach the Lord. That approach must be according to His word. Take the example of Moses failure.

*Num 20:11 And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. Num 20:12 And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, **Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me** in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.* For his disobedience Moses lost the privilege of entering Canaan.

Peter says the same thing, *1Pe 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts:* God is holy by His very nature but we are not. It is incumbent upon us who bear the Name of the Lord, to bear it in a holy place, *Eph 2:21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: Eph 2:22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.* If we come before the Lord for any service, we must be Holy, we must be sanctified. Do not think for a moment that the Lord of the Older Testament is any different in His requirements to the Lord of the New. Do not think that the bar has been lowered in the New, that God is less concerned for holiness, that Christ is more accepting of our ignorance and happy with our best and flawed efforts. That is a false Christ.

I think that some people are of the opinion that because they are singing and praising before the Lord, turning up for the weekly service, that it somehow has a redemptive value. What do I mean by that? I mean, that people think that God gets pleasure out of their attendance, simply because they show up and more than that, because they feel pleased with themselves, God must also be. But this is not to be taken as so, *Mal 1:7 "You offer contaminated food on my altar. "But you ask, 'Then how have we contaminated you?' "When you say that the LORD'S table may be despised. Mal 1:8 When you bring a blind animal to sacrifice, isn't that wrong? When you bring a lame or a sick animal, isn't that wrong? Try offering it to your governor. Would he accept it from you? Would he welcome you?" asks the LORD of Armies. Mal 1:9 "Now try asking God to be kind to you. This is what you are doing! Will he welcome you?" asks the LORD of Armies. Mal 1:10 "I wish one of you would shut the doors to my house so that you could not light fires on my altar for no reason. I'm not pleased with you," says the LORD of Armies, "and I won't accept your offerings.* Unsanctified worship is unacceptable.

I would thus far suggest that whatever you sing and praise, whatever its sources and origins, it is unacceptable unless it is offered out of a clean heart. *Psa 24:3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? Psa 24:4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. Psa 24:5 He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.* Preparation for worship is very important. How then can you encourage worship out of a mixed multitude? How can unbelievers and sinners join in songs of worship with the saints? How can dirty hands and a dirty heart ascend to the hill of the Lord? They cannot.

How then can we encourage the unsaved to do this and join in worship with believers? I think that we do it because the lives of so called “Christians” today differ little from their worldly unbelieving contemporaries. The difference hardly exists and we see them as just unfortunates who with a bit of encouragement can worship just like us. We need to be reminded, *Eze 22:26 Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.* We ARE different!

Can one person ruin a whole service of worship? Can a single person's sin make the whole corporate service of worship unacceptable? I believe that it can and does. One man's sin brought ruin on humanity. Sin is like yeast according to the Apostle, it will work its way through the whole lump and this is the argument for removing the blatant, deliberate, unconcealed, transparent sins from the congregation by removing that person. (Read 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians chapter 5). Although the Apostle is specifically dealing with “fornication”, *1Co 5:8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. 1Co 5:9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators.*

I think that it is quite reasonable to apply his sanction to the other sins that he later speaks about in verse 11. Note that these are applied to those who call themselves “brother”. It is further worth noting that before we go out condemning the sins of the world, we should put our own church in order. Worship must also be spiritual. *Joh 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

Another point that I would make on worship is that it is not the domain of a church band or the organist. In Corinth, the whole church comes together bringing something. *1Co 14:26 How is it then,*

*brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.* Most people today attend expecting others to put on the “show”. They are like people going to a communal meal who bring nothing. Guests who turn up without a bottle of wine or flowers. They have nothing to give and so they cannot edify the others.

So what music does God like? You surely did not expect me to answer that did you? You ask Him. I do think though that you will know as your heart becomes focused on Him. *Rom 14:8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.*

## Chap 33. The Olivet discourse – 13. Revival in a declining world

Tribulation		
<i>Mat 24:29 Immediately <b>after the tribulation of those days</b> shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:</i>	<i>Mar 13:24 But in those days, <b>after that tribulation</b>, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, Mar 13:25 And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.</i>	<i>Luk 21:25 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth <b>distress of nations</b>, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Luk 21:26 Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.</i>

I return to the subject of tribulation because it occurs a second time in the discourse. It is important and I want to make some further comments especially in the light of modern commentators who seem to employ few scriptural principles of interpretation. They are like people who take a jigsaw puzzle and force the pieces together to make their own picture, not what was originally intended but something of their own imagination. Here are two quotes, one from Kent Hovind and another from John McArthur. Let me say in advance that I do not agree with either of them. I think that their views detract from the glory due to Christ alone and cast it upon some earthly nation or apostate Jews.

Kent Hovind:

“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place ...then shall be great tribulation....” (Matthew 24:15, 21).

Once the antichrist sets up an image in the new temple, the Jews (and many Christians) finally realize this guy is not the messiah they have been waiting for for thousands of years. Antichrist’s act of defiance against God and idolatry is **the sign that the second half of Daniel’s 70th week is beginning**. You can count off the 1,260 days until the Lord returns from that day. Some will object and say, “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my father only” (Matthew 24:36). Obviously

Jesus said this while He was on earth and had set aside some of His heavenly powers during His earthly stay (Philippians 2:6–8). Once He rose from the dead and ascended back to Heaven, things changed. He certainly knows the day and hour now!

“And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people (Daniel’s people—the Jews): and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book” (Saved Jews and Gentile **believers are raptured out after 1260 days of tribulation**; and many **unbelieving Jews will see the rapture and get converted** (too late) and are delivered through the time of wrath to come.) (Daniel 12:1).

During this last 3½ years, life will be mostly 'normal' for those who receive the mark and go along with the antichrist. “As is was in the days of Noah...” It will only be those who don't accept the mark or co-operate with “the system” who will be arrested, imprisoned and killed.

Jesus told us to endure! Those who went along with Hitler and reported any Jews that were hiding or anyone hiding the Jews had a good life and was safe and happy...for a few years (sic!).

John McArthur:

The Bible says **that there is coming a period of time** and the period is **seven years**, a period of time that is characterized by wars, rumors of wars, nations rising against nations, **Israel is returning to the land to be redeemed in the land**, a time of earthquakes, pestilence, famine, unbelief, the growth of the apostate false church, ecumenism, one world government, the rule of antichrist, fiery and furious judgments that will kill over half the population of the world and so forth.

All of these are very clearly outlined events **of a period of time known as the tribulation or the time of great trouble**. The question is does the church, that is we who know and love Jesus Christ and are His body, do we go through that time or do we exit before that time? Now that's a very important question.

I really do not want to give time to these speculations but I must say this. You do not find these views of the end times in the general writings of the NT, nor a period of 7 years left over (sic!) from Daniel’s prophecy. I leave the book of Revelation out for now as it is very symbolic and I think viewing life from the heavenly perspective (The Day of The Lord). That said, there is nothing in the other NT writings that lead us to these ideas of a 7 year tribulation at the end and a return of Israel to Palestine to conduct Temple worship. The church had to wait 2 millennia for these “new prophets”, latter day “wise men” to roll up and tell us, that what had been believed in the past was incorrect and what was said in the NT was incomplete. I ask that you refer back to our basic definitions to see the error in this thinking.

There is also nothing in the NT that suggests that there will be a great final triumph of the church **on earth**, sadly and to the contrary it is a history of decline. *Luk 18:8 ..... Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* *2Th 2:2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be*



*troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. 2Th 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, **except there come a falling away first**, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 2Ti 3:1 This know also, that in the last days **perilous times** shall come..... 2Ti 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus **shall suffer persecution**. There is no final “shoot out” with earthly weapons, the appearing of Christ will Himself destroy, 2Th 2:8 ..... shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: It is a history of decline and fall.*

We saw that by the end of the first century, error had spread in the churches (see our thoughts on the 7 churches “Jesus and His Church”). We see that persecution was growing and that the saints suffer tribulation. In fact in all ages there is tribulation and I would go further and say that if you are comfortable in your religion and have no sense of tribulation **today**, then I do not think that you are in the true faith. If you live cheek by jowl with the world and its people and you are comfortable in your soul, then you must examine where you are coming from. If you are at ease in this world and comfortable with the times we live in, having no sense of the need to be delivered from its evil, then you have a problem.

Lot chose to live in Sodom because the land was good for his flocks but it was hell for his soul. *2Pe 2:7 He rescued Lot, a righteous man deeply troubled by the shameless immorality of the wicked. 2Pe 2:8 (For that righteous man, while living among them, was **tormented in his righteous soul day after day by lawless deeds he saw and heard**.)* If we Christians cannot understand that, if we have no sensitivity to the evil around us, it must be that we are dead to the things of God and alive to the things of this world. God’s people are delivered out of tribulation and tribulation is the ongoing affliction that believers go through. *Rev 7:13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? Rev 7:14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

There is something else that the NT does not predict in conjunction with this spiritual decline and that is that there will be occasions of mass revival. By this I mean the phenomenon associated with a spiritual outpouring and reviving of failing churches. Jesus does not allude to this, neither do the Apostles. Perhaps and if this occurs, we are looking at something that is described differently in the NT?

The whole subject of ‘revival’ is outside of the scope of our current subject but I will touch upon it since it is a term of relatively recent origin. Martin Lloyd Jones definition of revival centres on the activity **in the churches**:

“We can define it as a period of unusual blessing and activity in the life of the Christian Church. Revival means awakening, stimulating the life, bringing it to the surface again. It happens primarily in the Church of God, and amongst believing people, and it is only secondly something that affects those that are outside also. Now this is a most important point, because this definition helps us to differentiate, once and for all, between a revival and an evangelistic campaign. An evangelistic campaign is the Church deciding to do something with respect to those who are outside. A revival is not the Church deciding to do something and doing it. It is something that is done to the Church, something that happens to the Church.”

Arthur Wallis in his book, *In the Day of Thy Power*, describes revival in the context of **the individual**:

“Revival is Divine intervention in the normal course of spiritual things. It is God revealing Himself to man in awful holiness and irresistible power. It is such a manifest working of God that human personalities are overshadowed, and human programmes abandoned. It is man retiring into the background because God has taken the field. It is the Lord making bare His Holy arm, and working in extraordinary power on saint and sinner””.

Is “revival” the right word? Is it a term that we could associate with the phenomena described above? Unusual blessing, something done to the church, Divine intervention, man retiring into the background, God working in extraordinary power? Looking at the churches today, many would think that they are alive but are they? *Rev 3:1 And to the messenger of the assembly in Sardis write: These things saith he who is having the Seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars: I have known thy works, and **that thou hast the name that thou dost live, and thou art dead**; Rev 3:2 become watching, and strengthen the rest of the things that are about to die, for I have not found thy works fulfilled before God.* Churches of the living dead? We might well think that they need more than a rocket under their pews to spark them up to eternal realities. We might say that they need “revival”.

What is it that will cause such a powerful change among the people of God? Where does it start? Well, there can be no doubt that it must be a work of God’s Spirit because it is clear the living dead are not asking for it. What characterises the change? I would say that it is the revelation of God in such extraordinary power that His fear or rather the fear of the Lord, becomes a potent reality. As Samuel Johnson remarked, “When a man knows he is to be hanged...it concentrates his mind wonderfully.” It is this focus that seems to be the great distinctive of revival. When men truly fear God, they truly obey God.

*Act 2:42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. Act 2:43 **And fear came upon every soul:** and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. Act 5:10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. Act 5:11 **And great fear came upon all the church,** and upon as many as heard these things. Act 9:31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and **walking in the fear of the Lord,** and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied. Act 19:17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and **fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.** Act 19:18 And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds.*

There have been numerous times in history where spiritual activity in communities appears to move up a gear in their commitment to Christ. People become obsessed with the things of Christ. The consequential effects are that society changes as people begin to change their habits and lifestyle choices. In the Welsh revival of 1904:

Whole communities were turned upside down, and were radically changed from depravity to glorious goodness. The crime rate dropped, often to nothing. The police force reported that they had little more to do than supervise the coming and going of the people to the chapel prayer meetings, while magistrates turned up at courts to discover no cases to try. The alcohol trade was decimated, as people were caught up

more by what happened in the local chapels than the local public houses and bars. Families experienced amazing renewal, where the money earning husband and father, the bread winner, had wasted away the income and sowed discord, but now under the moving power of the Holy Spirit, following the conversion to be a follower of Jesus Christ, he not only provided correctly for family needs, but was now with the family, rather than wasting his time, and wages, in the public houses of the village or town. Souls were saved, individual lives were changed and Society itself was changed. Countless numbers were converted to Christ.

I venture to suggest that there are times where the faith declines and the church becomes indistinguishable from the worldly societies, that it becomes a shadow of its former glory. At this time, the Spirit of God appears to move among small groups of believers who pray for and become key movers of a revival. Take for example the Lewis revival in 1949 recorded by Duncan Cambell.

The revival began with two elderly women who were praying intensively. Two old women, one of them 84 years of age and the other 82, one of them stone blind, were greatly burdened because of the appalling state of their own parish. It was true that not a single young person attended public worship. Not a single young man or young woman went to the church. They spent their day perhaps reading or walking but the church was left out of the picture. And those two women were greatly concerned and they made it a special matter of prayer. A verse gripped them: "I will pour water on him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground." They were so burdened that both of them decided to spend so much time in prayer twice a week. On Tuesday they got on their knees at 10 o'clock in the evening and remained on their knees until 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning--two old women in a very humble cottage. One night, one of the sisters had a vision. Now remember, in revival, God works in wonderful ways. A vision came to one of them, and in the vision she saw the church of her fathers crowded with young people. Packed to the doors, and a strange minister standing in the pulpit.

What happened afterward was typical of the revival. Take for example, this account:

Over 100 young people were at the dance in the parish hall and they weren't thinking of God or eternity. God was not in all of their thoughts. They were there to have a good night when suddenly the power of God fell upon the dance. The music ceased and in a matter of minutes, the hall was empty. They fled from the hall as a man fleeing from a plague. And they made for the church. They are now standing outside. Oh, yes--they saw lights in the church. That was a house of God and they were going to it and they went. Men and women who had gone to bed rose, dressed, and made for the church. Nothing in the way of publicity--no mention of a special effort except an intonation from the pulpit on Sabbath that a certain man was going to be conducting a series of meetings in the parish covering 10 days. But God took the situation in hand--oh, He became His own publicity agent. A hunger and a thirst gripped the people. 600 of them now are at the church standing outside.

What has happened? I think that we are looking at times when God's Spirit comes upon the church en masse in order to revive it from its lethargy and decline, to lift her up and bring her back to her first love and duty. The Holy Spirit is poured out upon a new generation in an age of decline and

tribulation. The Spirit of God does not, by this outpouring, reduce the tribulation. Within one year of Pentecost, the first great outpouring of the Spirit after Jesus' ascension, the church was persecuted, Acts 8:1 *And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time **there was a great persecution against the church** which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.*

I think that we should make it part of our prayers to ask for God's people to become "God fearing" people. The model prayer encourages us to pray that "Thy will be done" in heaven and upon earth. That is at the root of revival. It is the point where we disciples of Christ, really cry out for God to work His will among us. I mean, not just the bits we like but the hard bits that we avoid, the things that will make us a force to be reckoned with in our generation. It will though come with a price because it will bring conflict. If you can pray for revival with me, then you are at the same time strong enough to bear the consequences.

## Chap 34. The Olivet discourse – 14. The coming of Christ

We arrive in our studies at that key event which has created so many different interpretations as to how it will occur. We are looking at the second and final coming of Christ. This week we were told on the news that it was to happen. Quote:

"Although many expected a physical manifestation of God's wrath, God in fact, brought to pass a devastating spiritual judgment beginning on May 21, 2011. We have now entered into the darkest time in Earths' history, as we are living in the day of judgment, and heading for the final end of all things, the destruction of the universe, and the beginning of the new heavens and new earth, very likely to be on October 7th 2015 (eBible fellowship)".

This is an amendment to Harold Camping's (deceased) false prophecy that the world would end in 2011.

I had thought of examining in detail the various interpretations of the coming but I considered it pointless and confusing. I will simply state the events as I see scripture dictates them to be.

The Coming		
<i>Mat 24:25 Behold, I have told you before.</i>	<i>Mar 13:23 But take ye heed:</i>	
<i>Mat 24:26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.</i>	<i>behold, I have foretold you all things.</i>	
<i>Mat 24:27 <b>For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.</b></i>		
<i>Mat 24:28 For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.</i>		

The first point that I make is that it is an event of cosmic proportions and clearly visible to all mankind. It is not done in a remote location, a desert for example. It is not done in a secret chamber, a hidden crypt. It is therefore not a revelation to a specific few, a chosen group, a cabal of insiders especially chosen for the viewing. In some ways it is very similar to the first coming because that was quite public and if it was hidden, it was from those who were spiritually blind. The second time, it is

manifest to everyone and every eye shall see him. It is like a flash of lightning, visible from horizon to horizon. A light that will shine brightly and which all nations will see.

When our Lord departed, the scripture records that He went into a cloud. *Act 1:9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. .... this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.* Likewise, when He returns, the Apostle John records, it shall be with clouds and that every eye shall see him. *Rev 1:7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.*

We have probably all heard Charles Wesley's advent hymn that drew on this imagery, "Lo He comes with clouds descending". What you may not know is that Charles took the hymn from John Cennick who wrote in 1752 'Lo, He cometh'. I think that the original by Cennick is much more to the point.

Lo, he cometh endless trumpets blow before his bloody sign!  
Midst ten thousand saints and angels see the crucified shine.

Paul describes this event to the Thessalonians. It is spoken of to comfort them in their tribulation. *1Th 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 1Th 4:17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 1Th 4:18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

*2Th 1:6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; 2Th 1:7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 2Th 1:8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 2Th 1:9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; 2Th 1:10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.*

*That coming was not expected imminently in Paul's day. 2Th 2:2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. There were other events ahead of it 2Th 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 2Th 2:4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.* I do not want to divert from the focus of our study but I will state that this word "Temple" refers not to the structure in Jerusalem which was destroyed and of which there is no mention of rebuilding in the New Testament. The word is better translated holy place, you recall, it is the word naos (ναός) and was used by Jesus to describe His body. I suggest that this man of sin appears in the Church, *1Co 3:16 Know ye not that ye are the temple (naos) of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?* This man of sin, the son of perdition, is in some ways is the aggregate of human evil, the integration of all antichrists.

So we see, Christ comes the final time, He only comes once, He comes in full view, He comes with the sound of a trumpet, He comes in the clouds, He comes with His angels, He comes in judgement, He comes with His saints and lifts His living saints to meet Him in the air.

We might pause and ask ourselves why have we been told these things by Jesus? It is to induce in us a spirit of watchfulness, *Mat 24:42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.* You say, well, I am saved, once saved always saved, surely it does not matter whether I watch or not, I will be saved. Really? You say you are saved but I say if that is so, you will watch. The warning will certainly reveal our spiritual state. There are those who live this life as if it is all that counts. They live it at the expense of their spiritual well being. They live it to the measure that they become careless of the eternal truths. I will go further and say that eternal truths seldom enter their minds unless it is provoked by others. They live carelessly and happily without it, relying on the occasional ministrations of others. If you were to question these persons about their faith, their salvation, their relationship with Christ they would be extremely upset. They would round on you and ask what right you have to cast doubt on their beliefs?

There is another reason to be watchful and that is because we will all die and appear before Christ. Some foolish people think that it will never happen to them. Yet every death is a reminder that they are approaching their own demise and they refuse to face the last enemy. It is never a popular subject and one that is seldom preached upon. If it must happen, then we all hope that it will occur at a pace that will allow us sufficient time to reflect and make our final repentance before our heart stops. But what if we were to be taken suddenly, in a flash? One minute we are in this world, immersed in this life and in the next millisecond we are plunged into eternity? 3,500 apparently healthy people just drop down dead each year for no known reason, 150,000 people in UK have a stroke and of those 53,000 people die each year, 1 in 6 men and 1 in 10 women die each year of Coronary Heart Disease. Sudden death is a real possibility and for many a reality. One minute we are here and the next we are somewhere in eternity. Within a week we may be found in a grave.

We live a short and uncertain life. That is why, I suggest, that we must focus on this certainty that Christ Jesus our Lord will come for us, one way or another. If Christ does not come for us He will send His angels to bring us to Him.

How many people who thought they were Christians but led happy-go-lucky lives, instead of opening their eyes in glory open their eyes in torments in that sudden instant of death? *Luk 16:22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; Luk 16:23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.* I wonder if that beggar had more time to consider his state than the rich man, shackled to his daily distractions?

I see Lazarus at the rich man's gate<sup>25</sup>. He watches him go out each day, fed, watered and happy, scarce noticing the beggar. Lazarus must have wondered what he had done to deserve such a life, a life of hunger, discomfort, illness and misery. What God above would do such a thing, how could He discriminate so violently against him as if he did not have enough to suffer? And as the dogs licked his salt weeping sores, he would have had plenty of time to ponder life's mysteries. The rich man of course had no such time, except for the occasional appearance in the synagogue to be greeted by his

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<sup>25</sup> The rich man and Lazarus: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-rY5XnFn1k>

friends and admired for his wonderful wealth. Lazarus stank too much to be admitted to the big house and as for the Temple offerings, what could he give? He must be content with dreaming of the droppings from the rich man's table, the things that could not fit in this rich man's mouth.

I think that in his state, Lazarus came to see that there was more to life and in his wretched state found comfort in God, who would in time make all things clear to him. The rich man with the distraction of his riches did not think much about life other than to have the occasional grateful feeling for being singled out to have riches. Yet it was those riches that would be his downfall, not that the riches themselves were evil but that they stole something very precious from him. They stole time with God. God had His angels waiting for Lazarus but as for the rich man, his next glance when he lifts his eyes up in death, is Hell in all its torments. What was it all worth now?

The rich man did not go to Hell because he was rich but because he was an unrepentant sinner. There is no great virtue in riches and it can be used for good or it can be used for evil. Some people know how to use it well and they do but others become snared by its deceitfulness. *Mar 4:19 And the cares of this world, and **the deceitfulness of riches**, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.* Riches can displace the word of God and strangle it. Riches can become a thief of God's word for they will steal the time we should spend in it. The rich man had "Moses" but he did not listen, just as his five brothers did not listen, *Luk 16:31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.* **The rich man went to Hell because he was mired in personal sin that was never dealt with.**

There is no great virtue in poverty but it can make a soul appreciate the simple things in life. Who have the poor as a champion? They have the Lord, *Deu 15:11 For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land. The poor exist in some measure to test our liberality.* Perhaps the poor are more likely to seek the face of God because they are so dependent but **Lazarus never went to "Abraham's bosom" because he was poor but because he at some stage made peace with God.**

In their passing we see no reference to Lazarus' body, *Luk 16:22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;* Perhaps he had no funeral, perhaps the dogs finished him off physically? It did not matter for he was more alive now than ever he had been. The rich man was buried but the reality for him was that he was in hell. How many times do people stand by a silent grave as the dust is sprinkled on the coffin, unaware that the soul of the person that they look down upon is now in torments? If only they could hear and see?

Solomon said well when he wrote, *Ecc 12:1 Remember your Creator when you are young, before the days of trouble come and the years catch up with you. They will make you say, "I have found no pleasure in them."* GW. According to a study by George Barna, "nearly half of all Americans who accept Jesus Christ as their saviour do so before reaching the age of 13 (43%), and that two out of three born again Christians (64%) made that commitment to Christ before their 18th birthday. One out of eight born again people (13%) made their profession of faith while 18 to 21 years old. Less than one out of every four born again Christians (23%) embraced Christ after their twenty-first birthday." It seems that a life lived apart from the Creator is less likely to be repaired in old age. The longer it is left the more inured, hardened, we become against God.

Of course the rich man was not ready, few are but there was no excuse. The rich man never made peace with God. Like his 5 brothers, they all had access to “Moses and the Prophets” but he never listened to them, perhaps because like most people he had little time for scripture. That is just the point. It is a question of ‘time’ and where we invest it and where we do not. A careless life, a life with no time to repent, a life extinguished suddenly and without Christ, leads to an eternity of pain. I have said before, in my profession, road safety, that the only valid reason I do it, is to give a person that much more time to come under the sound of the gospel. Yet men lead careless lives, lives that they think will be unaffected by trouble, but ahead lies a yawning abyss that separates men eternally from the presence of their Creator, *Luk 16:26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.* By then it is all too late.

It is not morbid to think of the end of life and the coming of Christ, it is vital. I cannot think of anything more blessed to dwell upon than the coming of Christ. It matters not to me whether I see Him in the clouds, for I shall surely see Him, perhaps and hopefully, sooner than that. *Php 1:23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:*

It is far better on so many counts and this too should focus us on this theme. Does the prospect of the coming of Christ delight us or do we feel uncomfortable that it will interfere with our expectations in this life? Do we view it as inconvenient? Is it an impertinent interruption of our fun? Is it like those children who do not want to go to bed as their parents tell them and they crave that bit more play time? O, we will sing of the coming of the Lord, yet we only half heartedly expect it and most certainly do not welcome it for its inconvenience. It is like the story Jesus told of a man who sent his servant out to invite people to a great feast. You would think that the delights on offer would have been a wonderful attraction but they were not.

*Luk 14:16 Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: Luk 14:17 And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. Luk 14:18 And **they all with one consent began to make excuse.** The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. Luk 14:19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. Luk 14:20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. Luk 14:21 So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. Luk 14:22 And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. Luk 14:23 And the lord said unto the servant, **Go out into the highways and hedges,** and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. Luk 14:24 For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.*

The things of this life had taken a precedent. A newly purchased piece of land, the new yoke of oxen, the new wife, all were far more important than to attend the feast. It was of course an insight into their personal priorities. None of the things these guests were doing was wrong, in fact they were good things, things that would have blessed their families and communities. They were all people of substance and in other circumstances, what they were doing was to be applauded. In other circumstances they were good and faithful servants.



Yet there is nothing more important in life than this as far as we are concerned. *Mat 6:31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? Mat 6:32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. Mat 6:33 But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

There is nothing that you or I do in this life that God cannot finish without us. We are not so indispensable in the grand scheme of things, that the Lord could not find somebody else to complete our work. We are not that important that the world revolves around us, or that if we ceased to exist it would stop. Thousands of great persons die every day and life continues well enough without them. All that is left to mark their passing is a small square of earth. They are seldom remembered thereafter. Walk though a graveyard and they are nearly all “unknowns” to you, no matter what great things they did in life, no matter how they influenced their generations. There is nothing that we do, that is so important that it overrides this priority of seeking God’s kingdom. Do we really understand that? However we view the importance of our labours in this life, it is all left behind. *1Ti 6:7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.*

It does not please our Creator when we die in sin. *Eze 18:32 For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.* That is why, in our text today, Jesus has “told you before”. **I told you so!** When we leave this life behind, what sort of life can we expect to go to? It will depend very much on how we faced up to that great truth that one way or another, we would meet Christ. Christ is coming.

We might meet Him as our great friend and Saviour or we will meet Him as our judge and nemesis but we must meet Him. We cannot avoid meeting Him, we cannot escape meeting Him. How do we want to meet Him?

## Chap 35. The Olivet discourse – 15. Has Christ come into you?

The coming of Christ		
<p><i>Mat 24:30 And then shall appear <b>the sign of the Son of man in heaven</b>: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and <b>they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds</b> of heaven with power and great glory.</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and <b>they shall gather together his elect from the four winds</b>, from one end of heaven to the other.</i></p>	<p><i>Mar 13:26 And then <b>shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds</b> with great power and glory.</i></p> <p><i>Mar 13:27 And then shall he send his angels, and <b>shall gather together his elect from the four winds</b>, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.</i></p>	<p><i>Luk 21:27 And then <b>shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud</b> with power and great glory.</i></p> <p><i>Luk 21:28 And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.</i></p>

We continue our thoughts on the coming of Christ and we remind ourselves that Jesus gives us no focus upon things such as a rebuilt Temple at Jerusalem, a great earthly battle at Armageddon, a

final single period of Tribulation. He focuses our attention upon Himself and the signs that point to His return. This is important as we consider the second coming.

As we approach another Christmas, many people celebrate a festival called “Advent”, a period from the end of November to the 24<sup>th</sup> December. It prepares to celebrate the birth of Christ and also anticipate His return. I am not aware that Christians make anything of the second coming but they certainly indulge the first. Many of His sworn enemies will use the occasion of His first coming as an excuse for drunken excess and commerce. Others who claim to know Him will over indulge His first coming and celebrate His birth, before wrapping Him up for another year. The church ever looking backwards, doing what they were never asked to do by God. Ask yourself, where in all of this is the church focused upon the second coming? Where is it a subject that we give a fraction of time considering in comparison with the time spent on a sentimental “Christmas”? Where is the church looking forward to this momentous event?

I will try and avoid the charge of mysticism but there is also a danger to our spiritual lives that we completely externalise Christ. By this I mean that our only perception of Christ is that He is outside of us, and in another place. We view Him as a distant listener, one whom we can only hear through the pages of scripture rather than in our hearts and minds. Does this thought of the coming of Christ, at some future time, serve further to distance us from Him?

It raises a very interesting question as to how we view Christ? Do we view Him as living outside of us, away from us, in some other part of the Universe, contactable only through prayer? Or do we feel Him as a real presence in our lives? If He really is with us, how do we experience this truth that Paul lays before us: *Eph 2:6 And hath raised us up together, and **made us sit together** in heavenly places **in Christ Jesus***: Is it really something we experience in our life or is it just an intellectual truth? Additionally, how does this affect my view of His coming, when I am in actual fact seated with Him already?

It is also a fact taught by Paul: *Rom 8:11 But if **the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you**, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit **that dwelleth in you***. If we have experienced forgiveness, we should be experiencing “the indwelling of Christ”. Christ must actually be in us, *2Co 13:5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, **how that Jesus Christ is in you**, except ye be reprobates?*

If Christ is not in us, we are none of His, *Rom 8:9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*. I think this translates it better, *Rom 8:9 You are no longer ruled by your desires, but by God's Spirit, who lives in you. **People who don't have the Spirit of Christ in them don't belong to him**. Rom 8:10 But Christ lives in you. So you are alive because God has accepted you, even though your bodies must die because of your sins. CEV*. That is a very clear statement of the relationship between a believer and Christ. The new birth is in reality, the birth of Christ in us, it is the advent of Christ in us, born from above, born of the Spirit.

Evangelism can only proceed from the acceptance of this, *Col 1:27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory: Col 1:28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we*

*may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:* I think that too much preaching comes from the heart of man and not from “Christ in you”. *Philemon 1:6 That the communication (sharing) of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.* I am saying that we should nurture **Christ IN US**, *Gal 4:19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.* We need to develop an inner consciousness of Christ, an awareness of His presence in us. We need to be sensitive as to where our desires are in conflict with His. We need to let Christ be in us, *Php 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:*

Our prayers to the Father are through Christ in us, not Christ outside of us. This must be so because Christ is in us. It is, if I may stretch a point, a symbiosis, a yoke shared, a life joined, a marriage in miniature of Christ and the Church. *Php 3:20 We, however, are citizens of heaven. We look forward to the Lord Jesus Christ coming from heaven as our Saviour.* GW. The second coming, by this, does not mean that our relationship begins when He comes, rather, it marks the consummation of that relationship in all its fullness. I encourage us all to explore that relationship with Christ IN US.

Why should we also look forward to the appearance of Christ? I imagine that there were many who tried to claw their way up the side of the Ark when the flood came. Others paralysed with shock as the waters rose. Men crying out for their mother or God, screaming as the storm broke. I think that they would all have appreciated the wisdom of looking forward. As we shall see, the coming of our Saviour bears many similarities to the Flood of Noah. It is sudden, it comes when least expected and it comes on just another ordinary day. We shall return to that warning.

What is the Sign of the son of Man? I think that it is just that, the appearance of Christ in the clouds of heaven. Just as in the days of Noah, the sign of the coming judgement upon humanity was the appearance of that first cloud signifying the commencement of the Flood. It is not however the only sign of the times.

*2Th 2:2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. 2Th 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;* I imagine that when you read that passage, what grips your imagination is the “man of sin”. Another of those spectacular events to focus your mind upon. We love the spectacular and despise the mundane.

Is there something wrong with us? The approach to understanding end time prophecy is similar to people who try to guess for example, what the latest Star Wars film will contain. Their imagination goes into free fall and it is not really that important if they are wrong because they just wanted to see the film anyway. We always like to guess how everything will end. Yet the so called “christian” approach to guessing the end of the story can become very divisive. I have seen more arguments about “how it ends” than perhaps any other teaching. It becomes an article of faith and a part of the condition of membership to some groups. Back in the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of this series we gave examples of this.

It is very arrogant that the so called servants of God should dictate that you and I must believe their view of an event **that has not even occurred**. Our Lord Jesus Himself does not lay down a view of prophecy that **MUST** be believed in order to be a part of His church. We are to trust Him alone. People who insist that we are to believe a particular prophetic view, are building their own image of

the church. Do not trust them for a moment. Indeed, I think that the uncertain details that may exist of the second coming, serve to focus us more on the subject, than if it was all laid out in comprehensible order, “signed sealed and dusted” as they say.

What will our relationship be to Christ when He comes? Is not this far more important than “how it ends”? Perhaps our spiritual state does not trouble us in the least, after all, just recall that old profession of faith, that “give your heart to Jesus” routine and all will be well? Surely it must still be valid? My friends, what should concern us as we approach these events is what state are we in? It is not what state we were in years ago, but now, today, how we are with God that matters. It is made even more significant, because before the “man of sin” appears, there is a falling away, a general apostasy. It is probably this global apostasy that makes it possible for the “man of sin” to get his credibility but we shall see. Will you and I be among the apostates or with the “few”?

“First”, we are told, firstly I say, before “the day of Christ” and before the “man of sin”, comes **APOSTASY**. *2Th 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first.* If you are looking for a sign, then are you looking for that, as a sign of the coming of Christ? Does it worry you that men are turning away from the faith, that false teachers are on the rise encouraging this, that false prophets are breeding lies in the churches. The term apostasy comes from the Greek word *apostasia* (ἀποστασία) meaning defection, departure, revolt or rebellion. It has been described as a wilful falling away from, or rebellion against, Christianity. This means, by definition, that there must be something to fall away from. There must be an established position from which those calling themselves “Christians” depart. Some sort of orthodoxy, a set of doctrines which were believed by Christians that are no longer believed or practiced. It is far more than that, it is a falling away from Christ.

You will say that this cannot be true of our age. Look how many churches there are, look at how many people still go to church, we are still, barely so but to all intents and purposes, a “Christian” country. That is no proof of orthodoxy. Over the past few hundred years, we have been undermining the faith once delivered. “Christianity” barely resembles the church of the New Testament. We have been warned about false Christs, false teachers and false prophets and when these have done their evil work, **the result will be apostasy**. There will be a move away from Jesus Christ the Son of Man.

As we have remarked before, many of the social, moral values and beliefs that we were brought up with as children have been undermined or replaced. We live in a world where changing values are an acceptable part of life. Our values evolve and change, we are told. Just as there has been an acceptance of Darwinian human evolution, hand in hand with that is the evolution of our beliefs. We are all changing, man is evolving, developing, improving and in that process, we are creating values and beliefs that are appropriate to our position on our evolutionary development. This is in stark contrast with the “faith once delivered”, to Jesus Christ “the same, yesterday, today and forever”, of the Divine Word that abides forever, the same and unchanging. Apostasy is a weapon of the devil to drive us away from Christ, to change us.

Why then do we have these changes? It is because we have lost sight of the nature of the world in which we live. It is a world in conflict, a world of Principalities and Powers, *Eph 6:12 This is not a wrestling match against a human opponent. We are wrestling with rulers, authorities, the powers who govern this world of darkness, and spiritual forces that control evil in the heavenly world.* GW. It is a world of spiritual conflict. For those outside of Christ, this is a preposterous idea. The idea that

there are such things as evil spirits and devils but you only have to switch on the news to see that human behaviour is far from humane. This world is driven by its “god” but that is not the same as the Creator, *2Co 4:3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 2Co 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

Shifting patterns of beliefs are part and parcel of the world in which we live. One day it was wrong to cohabit outside of marriage, next day it is de rigueur, it is acceptable. Things that were happening behind closed doors, considered sinful, now become publicly acceptable. Values changed to suit the desires of the flesh, values which undermined our faith. I contend that because there are generations that have been brought up to accept these “evolving” and changing values, apostasy has no meaning to them. Apostasy can only have a meaning if there are absolute values, unchanging values from which we can apostatise. Change in a changing world is what we are led to expect today. We are encouraged to keep up with the times, to go with the flow and not bury our heads in the sand.

Many churches have accepted this idea of evolutionary change. Christianity is considered to be evolving to meet the needs of a changing world. Do you see the subtlety of this? It is no longer the world that needs to change, it is the church! The faith founded on an unshifting rock must now float away on the shifting tides, it can no longer provide a fixed point of reference, a beacon of hope, a lighthouse in a dark world. No, the church must change and shift its position if it is to make any progress in the world. The “church” must become a caterer for an apostate world and must change its menu to meet the modern palate, the modern taste fads.

That lie is how we start to apostatise. We lower our standards, change our values and rewrite the Bible. We fall, like the great Ephesian church, because we have left our first love, *Rev 2:4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Rev 2:5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*

Now here is a most important point. We are warned about this apostasy but we cannot stop this apostasy. It is written and will come to pass. What is the point of mentioning it if there is nothing that we can do about it? It does not follow that because it will happen that there is nothing that we can do. It is written into the script but we do not have to be part of it. Despite our best efforts, it will happen but we none the less, still have our duty to defend the faith, even if we are going against the tide. Let us at least recognise it as a sign of the times and let us continue to contend for the faith.

Then comes the “man of sin” who appears to be the epitome of wickedness, the distillation of satan in human form, the final demon to confront the Son of Man. I would associate this with that great world economic system, Babylon the Great the mother of harlots. *2Th 2:8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: 2Th 2:9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 2Th 2:10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 2Th 2:11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 2Th 2:12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

I think that this passage in Revelation alludes to this. *Rev 13:4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? Rev 13:5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. Rev 13:6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. Rev 13:7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. Rev 13:8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

It all points to a great apostasy with Christianity all but overwhelmed, but it is at this nexus in the history of the cosmos, with humanity on the verge of being wiped out by satan, with the church at a low ebb, with the devil sitting in the “temple” of God (the visible church), victory almost within its evil claw, that Christ appears. *Rev 19:19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. Rev 19:20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.*

It is all over in an instant. There is no prolonged battle, no slugging match, it is the power of the Word that destroys all this evil, *Rev 19:21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, **which sword proceeded out of his mouth:** and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.* That Word which our Saviour God spoke to bring Creation to life will bring it to its end. If this is Armageddon, it is no contest, it is a very one sided battle.

What is a great lesson of all of this? It is clear, that if Christ destroys the works of satan at some future date, He could have done it at any time in past history. Christ is not subject to events, they are subject to Him. If He could not have done it, He was never a sovereign Lord, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, but He is. He is Omnipotent, He is the Creator of all of these Principalities and Powers, He made them in the beginning *Joh 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.* No, there must be another reason that all of this has come to pass. A reason for Creation.

The lesson then is this. It is, that mankind is eternally dependent upon its Creator if it wants to be at peace with its Creator.

## Chap 36. The Olivet discourse – 16. A lost generation?

The Fig tree		
<p><i>Mat 24:32 Now learn <b>a parable of the fig tree</b>; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.</i></p>	<p><i>Mar 13:28 Now learn <b>a parable of the fig tree</b>; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near:</i></p> <p><i>Mar 13:29 So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors.</i></p> <p><i>Mar 13:30 Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done.</i></p>	<p><i>Luk 21:29 And he spake to them a parable; <b>Behold the fig tree</b>, and all the trees;</i></p> <p><i>Luk 21:30 When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.</i></p> <p><i>Luk 21:31 So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand.</i></p> <p><i>Luk 21:32 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.</i></p>

We now come to a very difficult section of the Scripture. For some time, critics of the Christian faith have argued that Jesus explicitly said here that all of the events prophesied in the Olivet Discourse, including His return, would happen before the last person living at that time died based on verse 34 before us, *Mat 24:34 Verily I say unto you, **This generation** shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.*

CS Lewis reluctantly conceded to the assertion of the sceptics that Jesus was in error. He attributed this to the limited knowledge Jesus had in His incarnate human form. He wrote,

"Say what you like," we shall be told [by some critics], "the apocalyptic beliefs of the first Christians have been proved to be false. It is clear from the New Testament that they all expected the Second Coming in their own lifetime. And, worse still, they had a reason, and one which you will find very embarrassing. Their Master had told them so. He shared, and indeed created, their delusion. He said in so many words, 'This generation shall not pass till all these things be done.' And he was wrong. He clearly knew no more about the end of the world than anyone else." [Here the imaginary critics end speaking. CS Lewis begins next.]

It is certainly the most embarrassing verse in the Bible. Yet how teasing, also, that within fourteen words of it should come the statement "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." The one exhibition of error and the one confession of ignorance grow side by side.

It is **not** the most embarrassing verse in the Bible, it is another scriptural truth that we must address.

"If Jesus incorrectly predicted His return within the contemporaneous generation, but actually did not know that He was going to return within that time frame, then why did He so confidently assert that all of the words He had just spoken would come to pass in

Matthew 24:35? He said, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.' ”<sup>26</sup>

The JW's predicate the verse to the modern day (from August 15 issue of the 1968 Watchtower):

“One thing is absolutely certain, Bible chronology reinforced with fulfilled Bible prophecy shows that six thousand years of man's existence will soon be up, yes, within this generation! (Matt. 24:34) This is, therefore, no time to be indifferent and complacent. This is not the time to be toying with the words of Jesus that "concerning that day and hour nobody knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father." (Matt. 24:36) To the contrary, it is a time when one should be keenly aware that the end of this system of things is rapidly coming to its violent end. Make no mistake, it is sufficient that the Father himself knows both the "day and hour"!”

So certain were the JW's of this that they published a picture in May 1984 of the last generation. Sadly for these false prophets, the generation that “Will not pass away” all passed away.

John MacArthur explains the verse as referring to an end time generation:

“So ‘this generation’ refers to the people that are alive at that time that were not taken in the Rapture (?) because they did not know the Saviour, so they'll be Jews and Gentiles. But during the time of the Tribulation (?) what happens? God takes a hundred and forty-four thousand Jews (?) according to Revelation 7, they witness all over the world. Jews are saved (?). Gentiles are saved so that they can't even be counted. So you have a redeemed group and an unredeemed group and that unredeemed and redeemed group of Jews and Gentiles that have not gone in the Rapture because their salvation came after that, or they've never been saved, they're the generation who will see these things come to pass.”

I got lost there. However, I observe that the word “rapture” does not occur in scripture. That the 144,000 are **male virgins** from the 12 tribes of Israel, which, if you remember from an earlier study (Chapter 11) only 4 tribes can be found in the NT (where do the male tribes come from, what happens to Jewesses, and why is Dan missing?). Neither does it say that “this generation” are unsaved persons. This type of exegesis, if it deserves the term, is just pure fantasy which we might expect from the so called “Masters Seminary” (see chapter 8). I do not believe Macarthur's



<sup>26</sup> <http://www.thingstocome.org/whatgen.htm>



interpretations of scripture which have more in common with JW's than Christians. The following is taken from his statement of faith (or error depending where you stand):

### **The Second Coming and the Millennial Reign**

We teach that, after the tribulation period, Christ will come to earth to occupy the throne of David (Matthew 25:31; Luke 1:31-33; Acts 1:10-11; 2:29-30) and establish His messianic kingdom for a thousand years on the earth (Revelation 20:1-7). During this time the resurrected saints will reign with Him over Israel and all the nations of the earth (Ezekiel 37:21-28; Daniel 7:17-22; Revelation 19:11-16). This reign will be preceded by the overthrow of the Antichrist and the False Prophet, and by the removal of Satan from the world (Daniel 7:17-27; Revelation 20:1-7).

We teach that the kingdom itself will be the fulfilment of God's promise to Israel (Isaiah 65:17-25; Ezekiel 37:21-28; Zechariah 8:1-17) to restore them to the land which they forfeited through their disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). The result of their disobedience was that Israel was temporarily set aside (Matthew 21:43; Romans 11:1-26) but will again be awakened through repentance to enter into the land of blessing (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:22-32; Romans 11:25-29).

We teach that this time of our Lord's reign will be characterized by harmony, justice, peace, righteousness, and long life (Isaiah 11; 65:17-25; Ezekiel 36:33-38), and will be brought to an end with the release of Satan (Revelation 20:7).<sup>27</sup>

Quoting scriptures and stringing passages together does not equate to interpretation. Well, I could go on.

Let us return to the scripture. The term "this generation" as used by Matthew, clearly refers to the generation that was alive when Jesus spoke. It does not refer to a future generation. *Mat 11:16 But whereunto shall I liken **this generation**? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, Mat 12:41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with **this generation**, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. Mat 12:42 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with **this generation**, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. Mat 23:36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon **this generation**.*

"This generation" is clearly the generation living when "these things" come to pass. What things? Certainly not the end of the world, because "this generation" passed away before the end. "This generation" had to be the people that Jesus was speaking to. That should be an end to any speculation on the meaning of "this generation" but it is here that the apparent difficulty occurs. The section speaking about "this generation" is placed after the section on the "the sign" of the second coming and before the section on the "end of the world". In other words **if** the text is speaking sequentially, the events spoken of, namely the second coming, would have to have occurred in that "generation" that was alive at the time Jesus speaks. How do we explain this?

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.tms.edu/about-the-seminary/doctrinal-statement/>

What I think that we have to do with the passage of Matthew 24, is examine the structure and I have attempted to explain the structure in a chart (see below). Do the verses (Ch 24 vv 32 to 34) follow in a linear time sequence with the other verses or is there another explanation? There is an explanation that involves a construct used elsewhere and it is called a parenthesis. A parenthesis is an interjected explanatory or qualifying remark. For example I might be talking about one thing and suddenly, as a connected thought comes into my mind, start talking about something else, before returning to my main subject. This is not rare in scripture and I will give you one example which is found in the 15<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Paul's letter to the Corinthians. The parenthesis is shown in **blue text**.

*1Co 15:16 for if dead persons do not rise, neither hath Christ risen, 1Co 15:17 and if Christ hath not risen, vain is your faith, ye are yet in your sins; 1Co 15:18 then, also, those having fallen asleep in Christ did perish; 1Co 15:19 if in this life we have hope in Christ only, of all men we are most to be pitied.....( 1Co 15:20 And now, Christ hath risen out of the dead--the first-fruits of those sleeping he became, 1Co 15:21 for since through man is the death, also through man is a rising again of the dead, 1Co 15:22 for even as in Adam all die, so also in the Christ all shall be made alive, 1Co 15:23 and each in his proper order, a first-fruit Christ, afterwards those who are the Christ's, in his presence, 1Co 15:24 then--the end, when he may deliver up the reign to God, even the Father, when he may have made useless all rule, and all authority and power-- 1Co 15:25 for it behoveth him to reign till he may have put all the enemies under his feet-- 1Co 15:26 the last enemy is done away--death; 1Co 15:27 for all things He did put under his feet, and, when one may say that all things have been subjected, it is evident that He is excepted who did subject the all things to him, 1Co 15:28 and when the all things may be subjected to him, then the Son also himself shall be subject to Him, who did subject to him the all things, that God may be the all in all. ).....1Co 15:29 Seeing what shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? why also are they baptized for the dead? 1Co 15:30 why also do we stand in peril every hour? YLT.*

You can take verses 20 to 28 out and the passage still makes sense.

*1Co 15:16 for if dead persons do not rise, neither hath Christ risen, 1Co 15:17 and if Christ hath not risen, vain is your faith, ye are yet in your sins; 1Co 15:18 then, also, those having fallen asleep in Christ did perish; 1Co 15:19 if in this life we have hope in Christ only, of all men we are most to be pitied ..... 1Co 15:29 Seeing what shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? why also are they baptized for the dead? 1Co 15:30 why also do we stand in peril every hour? YLT.*

Verses 20 to 28 stand on their own as a parenthetical statement on death.

Mat 24:1 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.  
 Mat 24:2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.  
 Mat 24:3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, (1) **when shall these things be?** and (2) **what shall be the sign of thy coming, and (3) of the end of the world?**

**INTRODUCTION:** Mat 24:4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.  
 Mat 24:5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.  
 Mat 24:6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all *these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.*  
 Mat 24:7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.  
 Mat 24:8 All these *are the beginning of sorrows.*  
 Mat 24:9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.  
 Mat 24:10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.  
 Mat 24:11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.  
 Mat 24:12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.  
 Mat 24:13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.  
 Mat 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

Mat 24:15 **When** ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)  
 Mat 24:16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:  
 Mat 24:17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:  
 Mat 24:18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.  
 Mat 24:19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!  
 Mat 24:20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:  
 Mat 24:21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.  
 Mat 24:22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Mat 24:32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer *is nigh:*  
 Mat 24:33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, *even at the doors.*  
 Mat 24:34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

(2) What shall be the sign of thy coming?

Mat 24:23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here *is Christ, or there; believe it not.*  
 Mat 24:24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*  
 Mat 24:25 Behold, I have told you before. Mat 24:26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, *he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.*  
 Mat 24:27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.  
 Mat 24:28 For whosoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.  
 Mat 24:29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:  
 Mat 24:30 And then shall appear **the sign** of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.  
 Mat 24:31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Mat 24:32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer *is nigh:*  
 Mat 24:33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, *even at the doors.*  
 Mat 24:34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

(3) The end of the world?

Mat 24:35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.  
 Mat 24:36 But of that day and hour **knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.**  
 Mat 24:37 But as the days of Noe *were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*  
 Mat 24:38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,  
 Mat 24:39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.  
 Mat 24:40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.  
 Mat 24:41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.  
 Mat 24:42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.  
 Mat 24:43 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.  
 Mat 24:44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

**CONCLUSION:** Mat 24:45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?  
 Mat 24:46 Blessed *is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.*  
 Mat 24:47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.  
 Mat 24:48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;  
 Mat 24:49 And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;  
 Mat 24:50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,  
 Mat 24:51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

(1) When shall these things be?

If we put Matthew 24 verses 32 to 34, after verse 22, the section relating to the fall of Jerusalem leads naturally into it, suggesting that it **may be** a parenthesis. I have laboured this point because I believe that where men challenge the veracity of scripture, men will always be found to be in error, not the scripture.

The associated “Parable of the Fig tree” was a warning to the generation living when Jesus spoke. *Mat 24:32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: Mat 24:33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, **know that it is near**, even at the doors. Mat 24:34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.* Matthew is enigmatic and we ask what “it” is, what is “it”, that is near? We could say that it was the approaching armies and the fall of Jerusalem. However, Luke’s account leads us into a different direction.

*Luk 21:29 And he spake to them a parable; **Behold the fig tree**, and all the trees; Luk 21:30 When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now **nigh at hand**. Luk 21:31 So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the Kingdom of God is **nigh at hand**.* “It” is a sign of the Kingdom of Heaven or, Kingdom of God (they are the same Kingdom).

What does the phrase “nigh at hand” mean? The words “nigh at hand” are also rendered “at hand”, *Mat 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, **Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand**. Mat 10:7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is **at hand**.* Perhaps a better translation would be “within your grasp”, implying the close proximity of the Kingdom. *Mar 1:15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God **is at hand**: repent ye, and believe the gospel. Mat 3:1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, Mat 3:2 And saying, **Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand**.*

The Kingdom was within the people’s grasp when John the Baptist preached, again when Jesus began His ministry and here where Jerusalem is undergoing judgement. It is a sign that people must repent or perish. “Repent for the Kingdom of God is within your grasp”. *Luk 17:20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Luk 17:21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, **the kingdom of God is within you**.*

The Kingdom of God is the realm where God is acknowledged as King and that is in the hearts of His people.

In conclusion, while I am suggesting that the words of Jesus that we have examined here have their primary fulfilment at the fall of Jerusalem, they must also resonate with our own day. We should look to the signs of our times and two in particular should alert us to the coming of Christ. Firstly, the increased apostasy in the churches, secondly, the decline in faith.

## Chap 37. The Olivet discourse – 17. Not many are saved

The time of the end		
<p>Mat 24:35 <b>Heaven and earth shall pass away</b>, but my words shall not pass away.</p> <p>Mat 24:36 But of that day and hour <b>knoweth no man</b>, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.</p> <p>Mat 24:37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.</p> <p>Mat 24:38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,</p> <p>Mat 24:39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.</p> <p>Mat 24:40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.</p> <p>Mat 24:41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.</p> <p>Mat 24:42 <b>Watch therefore</b>: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.</p> <p>Mat 24:43 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.</p> <p>Mat 24:44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.</p>	<p>Mar 13:31 <b>Heaven and earth shall pass away</b>: but my words shall not pass away.</p> <p>Mar 13:32 But of that day and that hour <b>knoweth no man</b>, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.</p> <p>Mar 13:33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.</p> <p>Mar 13:34 For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.</p> <p>Mar 13:35 <b>Watch ye therefore</b>: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:</p> <p>Mar 13:36 Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.</p> <p>Mar 13:37 And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.</p>	<p>Luk 21:33 <b>Heaven and earth shall pass away</b>: but my words shall not pass away.</p> <p>Luk 21:34 And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.</p> <p>Luk 21:35 For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.</p> <p>Luk 21:36 <b>Watch ye therefore</b>, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.</p>

The first point that I want to make I respect to our passage today is that Jesus spoke about a historical character called Noah, a flood, literally a cataclysm (κατακλυσμός = kataklusmos) and an Ark. Jesus believed that Noah was real, unlike C S Lewis. I read a lot people quoting this man Lewis on Christian themes but Clive Staples Lewis did not believe in the total inerrancy of the Bible.

“Although Lewis never doubted the historicity of an account because the account was miraculous, he believed that Jonah’s whale, Noah’s ark, and Job’s boils were probably inspired stories rather than factual history”. Lewis also believed in a “Christian” purgatory after death. “Death should not deprive people of a second chance...Lewis frankly admitted believing in purgatory. To him it was a place for souls already saved but in need of purifying – purging. Lewis felt that our souls demand

purgatory. Who would want to enter heaven foul and dirty? Lewis thought of the dentist's chair. 'I hope that when the tooth of life is drawn and I am coming round, a voice will say, 'Rinse your mouth out with this' This will be purgatory.'"<sup>28</sup>

I ask how this man Lewis could believe in Christ, the finished work of Christ, the words of Christ when he openly contradicts them?

The factuality of the story before us is further emphasised by drawing a comparison between Noah's day and the day Christ returns. It was a time when most people had no idea of what was coming. Whether it was an Ark or the person of Christ, men failed to understand the significance of what was happening and what was coming. Of course it did not mean that the men of Noah's day were oblivious to the great container ship taking shape in the desert, or that men today are unaware of Christ, His birth and His death. Perhaps there is an over familiarity. The point is that it did not register as important. It did not figure in their **world view**<sup>29</sup> as being relevant.

What is happening here? It is that the people of Noah's day, those of today and those that will be around at the return of Christ have a similar world view. It is a world view that rejects any notion of a Creator and the Creator's judgement upon sin. *Gen 6:12 And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. Gen 6:13 And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.*

The people of Noah's day did not see themselves like that. As we shall see in our new series on "Healing", humanity has declined physically over the millennia but also and as we see here, they have declined morally, for they face the wrath of God upon their lives. I do not think that Noah's contemporaries were unduly worried by their lifestyles. What was happening was not so bad for them, that they should change. They could live with it because in their view it was all that they had. In short they were happy with their lives. They went to whatever equated to restaurants and bars in their days, eating and drinking, they went through marriages and life continued, as we might say, normally.

Men become desensitised to their Creator. They do not see or feel His presence and soon they begin to misrepresent Him. What follows next is that God removes the restraints on their depravity and their perverse nature goes to the extremes of its capability. *Rom 1:22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, Rom 1:23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Rom 1:24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Rom 1:25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. Rom 1:26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: Rom 1:27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly,*

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<sup>28</sup> The Great Divorce. C S Lewis cited at: <http://www.bereanbeacon.org/articles-on-christian-living/2015/6/20/cs-lewis-a-bridge-to-rome>

<sup>29</sup> World view: The overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world. A collection of beliefs about life and the universe held by an individual or a group.



*and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. Rom 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;*

As you and I well know, people in our own day have no sense that much of what they accept as right, is perverted behaviour in the eyes of God's. *Pro 30:12 There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.* This was often the case in the history of Israel, especially during the time of the kings, *Jdg 17:6 In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.* The idea that mankind will gravitate to "good", that he has some resident "good conscience" that will unswervingly direct him to live his life in line with the will of God, is a lie. There is such a thing as a conscience but it is not infallible and it can only function under the direction of the word of God.

Doing what is "right" is a conscious exercise of will, a religious duty, a daily task in the eyes of the Apostle Paul. *Act 24:16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.* This is a practical statement on loving God and our neighbour. Where we exercise that conscience towards men alone, we develop a humanistic approach to life. We become do-gooders, serving the needs of our fellow men. We will become social servants, food providers, service providers, welfare providers and we neglect our duty to God. Our lives will revolve around the service of humanity to the neglect of our service to our Creator.

Nearly 100 years ago, John Gresham Machen, in his book "Christianity and Liberalism" observed,

"The fundamental fault of the modern Church is that she is busily engaged in an absolutely impossible task, she is busily engaged in calling the righteous to repentance. Modern preachers are trying to bring men into the Church without requiring them to relinquish their pride; they are trying to help men avoid the conviction of sin. The preacher gets up into the pulpit, opens the Bible, and addresses the congregation somewhat as follows: "You people are very good," he says; "you respond to every appeal that looks toward the welfare of the community. Now we have in the Bible, especially in the life of Jesus, something so good that we believe it is good enough even for you good people." Such is modern preaching. It is heard every Sunday in thousands of pulpits. But it is entirely futile. Even our Lord did not call the righteous to repentance, and probably we shall be no more successful than He".

In "The New Testament: An Introduction", Machen applauded the modern church's renewed concern for the needy, he also added a warning. The church was coming to a new realization of her duty to help the poor, he said, in an obvious reference to the social gospel.

"It is useless to give a man a sermon when he needs bread"; poverty "sometimes prevents the gospel even from being heard." But, "material benefits were never valued in the apostolic age for their own sake, they were never regarded as substitutes for spiritual things. That lesson needs to be learned. Social betterment, though important, is insufficient; it must always be supplemented by God's unspeakable gift."

“...social action or “mercy ministries” (e.g. soup kitchens, medical clinics, etc.) must never be mistaken for evangelism. **They may be a means to evangelism but they are not evangelism.**”

A contemporary of Machen in the 1930's, with whom Machen conflicted, was an apostate missionary, Pearl Buck<sup>30</sup>. Days before her death, Buck spoke of the essential sadness of life. "We are poised here for a little while, and we can enjoy this through our minds and our senses, but we don't know anything, really." The supreme irony, as she saw it, was that humans recognized that they did not know where they came from or where they were going. And that fact constituted "utmost cruelty." Though Buck felt that the warrant for missions had evaporated in the face of modern science and anthropology, she knew that the loss of faith exacted its own melancholy price. That is how life ends without faith in Christ and a life that focused on social welfare and not God.

This is the lopsided view of life. Religion, if it exists, exists to serve men and self without reference to serving God. It does not ask “What should my relationship be with both God and men”. *Luk 10:27 And he answering said, Thou shalt **love the Lord thy God** with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and **thy neighbour as thyself**.*

Those who focus solely on humanity, self and human service will find that the neglect of God will cause their conscience to malfunction. *Tit 1:14 Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth. Tit 1:15 Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even **their mind and conscience is defiled**. Tit 1:16 **They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him**, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.*

The obverse of this religious currency is where man isolates himself from humanity, from his fellow humans he becomes a Divine recluse. He will deny that he is still in this world, even though he is not of it. He will elevate his service to God beyond any consideration of his fellow beings. In order to preserve his personally created bubble of holiness, his personal monastery, he will deter others from coming near to God. Of course, he will preach about his God but woe to you if you try to get near to his God. This attitude of pseudo-holiness breeds denominations and sects. *Mat 23:13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.* Religion becomes self serving and If you do follow these “holier than thou” people you may end up worse than you started, *Mat 23:15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.* Without the saving grace of God, mankind is doomed to failure. He will continue to degrade his own soul and rather than improve his condition, he will degenerate. *Psa 53:3 Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, **not one**.*

We may ask, was Noah any different to those around him? Noah was a preacher, *2Pe 2:5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, **a preacher of righteousness**, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;* Preaching, contrary to what many say, is the oldest profession. Abel was the first preacher and he left a sermon in blood, *Heb 12:24 And to Jesus the mediator of the*

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<sup>30</sup> Pearl Buck is an interesting character and a Nobel Prize winner:  
<https://www.english.upenn.edu/Projects/Buck/biography.html>



*new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, **that speaketh better things** than that of Abel.* Noah must have been a genuine preacher because he had found favour with God, *Gen 6:8 But **Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.** Gen 6:9 These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a **just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.*** It is not clear that when he was building the Ark, he knew that he could enter it. He was doing what he was told. However, after all that work, God did invite him, *Gen 7:1 And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.*

Noah was different and he survived the judgement. Not just him but his wife, children and their wives. How did they, his family, deserve that privilege alongside Noah? I can imagine that they gave Noah a strange look when he came back and told them of the epic task that God had given him. They may have been sceptical but they followed his lead. Noah's family clearly stuck with him as the head of the family and followed his teachings. I cannot see why the Lord would have saved them otherwise? They were a family under God and quite unique in that generation. They were different from those around them. Yet there would come a time when a righteous man could only guarantee his own salvation and not also his families, *Eze 14:14 Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD.*

Noah did not rely on others to head and lead his household. I see too many "Christians" who provide for the physical needs of their family and leave the most important thing, the spiritual dimension to other people. I heard this week a story about someone complaining that their church did not provide facilities for their children! Yet such people will rigidly determine what the family food diet should be but not what the family spiritual diet should be. They will constantly direct them in the passing things of this life but hold back on the eternal truths. I think that many "Christian" parents fear a rift with their offspring or a separation if they press the Gospel into their lives. Believe me, the separation and pain will be far greater if they do not.

It is here, with this liberal behaviour, that I think that Apostasy starts in the churches. The roots of apostasy lie in the family structure. You can blame the false teachers as much as you like but they can only exist if they have followers. *2Ti 4:3 A time will come when people will not listen to accurate teachings. Instead, they will follow their own desires and **surround themselves** with teachers who tell them what they want to hear.* GW. People chose churches that suit their views, not necessarily churches that will benefit their souls. If people do not like the leaders they will go elsewhere. No, it starts with the head of the house that must set a godly example and lead the family and not be led by them. If he fails to set an example, which is his God given duty, it will trickle down and the wife and children will also fall away. In time they will readjust their view of scripture to reflect their behaviour and justify it. That is how the rot sets in. That is the road to apostasy, the broad church, the broad way, the way to destruction and that is what the story of Noah is all about.

Do not think for a moment that Noah's family entered the Ark because they were like Noah, because they enjoyed the same walk with God or that they were perfect in their generations. They were not, as subsequent behaviour's suggest. They went in under Noah's "umbrella" so to speak. They were partakers of God's grace to him, just as we enter Christ, not because we are worth anything on our own but because our value is in Him alone.

Clearly, the Noah family believed what Noah said (and hence the Lord who spoke with Noah) else they would not have followed him into the ark. They would have gone the way of the rest of that generation. God invited them into the Ark, *Gen 7:1 And Jehovah said unto Noah, **Come thou** and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.* He does not say "Go into the Ark" as if He is outside and Noah would be inside. God is in the Ark and welcomes Noah. In that ark are "rooms" more correctly "nests", *Gen 6:14 Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms (nests) shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.* So we see the Ark as a type of heaven itself. *Joh 14:2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. Joh 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

If the comparison that Jesus makes with Noah's day is not a generalisation, then we should greatly fear. We should fear because **only** 8 people were saved. *1Pe 3:20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, **wherein few**, that is, eight souls were saved by water.* A few only, surely not? *Mat 7:13 "Enter through the narrow gate because the gate and road that lead to destruction are wide. Many enter through the wide gate. Mat 7:14 But the narrow gate and the road that lead to life are full of trouble. **Only a few people find the narrow gate.** GW.*

That is a frightening statistic to end on.

## Chap 38. The Olivet discourse – 18. The rewards of regret and service

Closing comments	
<p><i>Mat 24:45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:49 And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,</i></p> <p><i>Mat 24:51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.</i></p>	<p><i>Luk 21:37 And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives.</i></p>

*Mat 24:46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.* Many souls must lament in life, "If only I had been paying attention". If only I had done my duty correctly, none of this tragedy would have befallen me. If only I had been diligent in my duty. John Greenleaf Whittier expressed the concept of regret poetically: "Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are, 'It might have been.'"

In his autobiography, "Just as I Am", Billy Graham tells about a conversation he had with John F. Kennedy shortly after his election:

"On the way back to the Kennedy house, the president-elect stopped the car and turned to me. "Do you believe in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ?" he asked. "I most certainly do." "Well, does my church believe it?" "They have it in their creeds." "They don't preach it," he said. "They don't tell us much about it. I'd like to know what you think." "I explained what the Bible said about Christ coming the first time, dying on the Cross, rising from the dead, and then promising that he would come back again. 'Only then,' I said, 'are we going to have permanent world peace.'" "Very interesting," he said, looking away. "We'll have to talk more about that someday." And he drove on."

Several years later, the two met again, at the 1963 National Prayer Breakfast. "I had the flu," Graham remembers. "After I gave my short talk, and he gave his, we walked out of the hotel to his car together, as was always our custom. At the curb, he turned to me." "Billy, could you ride back to the White House with me? I'd like to see you for a minute." "Mr. President, I've got a fever," I protested. "Not only am I weak, but I don't want to give you this thing. Couldn't we wait and talk some other time?"

It was a cold, snowy day, and I was freezing as I stood there without my overcoat. "Of course," he said graciously." But the two would never meet again. Later that year, Kennedy was shot dead. Graham comments, "His hesitation at the car door, and his request, haunt me still. What was on his mind? Should I have gone with him? It was an irrecoverable moment."

Is that weeping and gnashing of teeth that Jesus describes, the consequence of regret, the regrets about time lost and moments past that are irretrievable? The possibility should sharpen our minds. When prophecy is said and done, the last word returns to our stewardship and service and that is precisely the point where Jesus ends His sermon. *1Co 13:8 Love never comes to an end. There is the gift of speaking what God has revealed, but it will no longer be used. There is the gift of speaking in other languages, but it will stop by itself. There is the gift of knowledge, but it will no longer be used.* GW.

*Mat 24:45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?* I want to draw your attention to two words in our text that require some further explanation. The first is "ruler". (Καθίστημι = kathistēmi) meaning to stand down, to designate or constitute. We are not looking at someone who Lords it over others, rather we are looking at someone who is constituted to be in charge. It is someone who has a Divine appointment, not in their own right but as a steward for another person. A steward for God.

The Law showed this stewardship in the appointment of judges. *Exo 22:8 If the thief be not found, then the master of the house shall be brought unto **the judges**, to see whether he have put his hand unto his neighbour's goods.* The word for judges is Elohim (a plural), the name of God. Judges were acting as men with the authority of God. *Joh 10:34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?* Perhaps this is also the idea behind the words, *Mat 18:18 Verily I say unto you,*

*Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

The second word “household” is derived from a word that you are familiar with “Θεραπεία = therapeia) whence our word therapeutic. It means attendance (specifically medical), care, attention, hence those who render service. Incorporated in this word for “household” is the idea of service to the occupants, service to the family and we might even stretch the thought to the idea of healing the souls of the household. It is similar to the meaning of the word curate, who is a person who is invested with the care or cure (cura) of souls of a parish. We see the word used of Moses, *Heb 3:5 And Moses verily was faithful in all his house (οἶκος = oikos), as a servant (θεράπων = therapōn), for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after.* Moses was like a medic to the house of Israel. His whole life was dedicated to making them well in the sight of Jehovah.

I think that this Doauy-Rheims translation gives the best sense of the verse. *Mat 24:45 Who, thinkest thou, is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath appointed over his family, to give them meat in season?* DRB. Our text is asking us to examine our stewardship of the things that God has given to us in the period before He returns. It is a period when we can make a huge investment in our eternity. *Mat 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: Mat 6:20 But **lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:*

So to whom does “faithful and wise servant” appeal? It appeals to all who have a service to God. It will apply to the husband and to the wife, to the home and family and it will apply to the wider ministry of the church. It will apply to anyone who has been given a position of responsibility. I have seen Christians seeking gifts, seeking position in the churches, seeking to be somebody and all the while neglecting what they have already been given. When it comes to that Mosaic quality of “faithfulness in his household” we are often sadly deficient. I heard a story recently about a mother who became tired of being asked what she did. She developed a Christian response to the question. She started to tell people, when asked what she did, “I am preparing the next generation of Christian leaders”. That is feeding people correctly, good stewardship and applied wisdom.

I recall one of the first ministries that I heard after my conversion was about failed stewardship. It was at an evangelical chapel and the text was, *Son 1:6 Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; **they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.*** The ministry warned us about how we can so easily serve others to the neglect of the things that we should care for. Paul applies this principle to his own faith using the analogy of a boxer. *1Co 9:26 So I run-but not without a clear goal ahead of me. So I box-but not as if I were just shadow boxing. 1Co 9:27 Rather, I toughen my body with punches and make it my slave so that I will not be disqualified after I have spread the Good News to others.* GW. He realised the danger of looking after others, other vineyards, to the neglect of his own.

Great men of God have often seen failure in their own household but I do not think that this can always be attributed to their neglect. *1Sa 8:1 And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. 1Sa 8:2 Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: they were judges in Beersheba. 1Sa 8:3 And his sons walked not in his ways, but*

**turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.** *1Sa 8:4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, 1Sa 8:5 And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.* God's mercy and grace are sovereign and He gives to whom He will. If Samuel's son's had not failed, then there would have been no Kings of Israel.

Our text, being addressed to the Apostles primarily, has particular application to those who serve the people of God, the household of faith, the family of God. This duty is to provide "meat" or nourishment. Nourishment by definition is the food necessary for growth, health, and good condition. I would suggest that the nourishment is not earthly food (although it might on occasion be so) but rather that nourishment of the soul. I remember a teacher in Blackpool in the late 1960's, Mr Davies, who described "Christians" as so ill nourished, that they were "candy floss Christians". One bite and they were all gone. No substance to their faith whatsoever, ill nourished and ill fed. Of course, you have to take the food in, so even if you have a good provider, unless you take in what is provided, then it will not benefit you at all.

There is a linkage between nourishment and maturity. *1Co 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto **carnal**, even as unto **babes in Christ**. 1Co 3:2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. 1Co 3:3 **For ye are yet carnal:** for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?* Carnality in Christianity, that is, a fleshly, human approach to the things of Christ is a result of the lack of spiritual diet. It is a result of the childish corrupt nature and it breeds division as we have seen in our own fellowship. God's Word version puts it well, *1Co 3:3 because you're still influenced by your corrupt nature. When you are jealous and quarrel among yourselves, aren't you influenced by your corrupt nature and living by human standards?* GW. If Christians are to mature, then they need a stronger diet of God's word. I find that those peddling a false humility, who say "I stick to the simple gospel" are those who use it as an excuse not to make any effort to grow and mature. Babies grow and milk is not a diet for life.

The faithful servant builds the church and himself. *1Ti 4:6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, **nourished up** in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. 1Ti 4:7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. 1Ti 4:8 For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. 1Ti 4:9 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation.* Again, I think this version says it better. *1Ti 4:6 You are a good servant of Christ Jesus when you point these things out to our brothers and sisters. **Then you will be nourished** by the words of the Christian faith and the excellent teachings which you have followed closely.* GW.

That task of nourishing has many aspects but I will just mention two. Firstly it builds faith in God. *Rom 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* If people say that they came to Christ through other words than the words of Christ, then they have another Christ. Salvation will follow the effectual working of the words of Christ. They will come through faithful ministry. *Rom 10:14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? Rom*

*10:15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*

The Indian Mutiny of 1857 provoked such a tremendous outpouring of grief and rage leading to a national day of fasting and humiliation during which Charles Spurgeon was invited to address the largest audience of his life: almost 24,000 people gathered in the Crystal Palace. He went, with a friend, to try the acoustics of the building the evening before the day for which the meeting was scheduled. He arranged that he should speak from the rostrum, and his friend should stand in one or two places near the rear of the building and listen. Those were the days before loud-speakers had been invented. Mounting the rostrum, the great preacher shouted the words, **'Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.'** This was repeated several times so that its audibility could be tested in various parts of the Palace. Then they left, satisfied that Spurgeon's voice could be heard all over the vast building. But they had not noticed that a workman was engaged in completing some repairs to the roof. He heard the text and went home later under deep conviction of sin. As a result of the plain quotation of the Word of God, the workman was saved. I read also that one woman was converted through reading a single page of one of Spurgeon's sermons, wrapped around some butter she had bought.

George Whitfield, it seems, was one of the greatest preachers of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and he contributed to the Great Awakening, as it was called, in America. His concern and persuasiveness were legendary. He even persuaded Benjamin Franklin, one of the committee of five who drafted the American Declaration of Independence and a very frugal man if there ever was one, to give more and more as a sermon Whitfield gave, progressed:

"I happened soon after to attend one of his sermons, in the course of which i perceived he intended to finish with a collection, and I silently resolved he should get nothing from me. I had in my pocket a handful of copper money, three or four silver dollars, and five pistoles [spanish coins] in gold. As he proceeded I began to soften, and concluded to give the coppers. Another stroke of his oratory made me ashamed of that, and determin'd me to give the silver; and he finish'd so admirably, that I emptied my pocket wholly into the collector's dish, gold and all."

A friend of Franklin knew about Whitefield's oratory power in collecting money, so he purposefully left all his money at home. However:

"Towards the conclusion of the discourse, however, he felt a strong desire to give, and apply'd to a neighbour who stood near him to borrow some money for the purpose."

"The application was unfortunately to perhaps the only man in the company who had the firmness not to be affected by the preacher. His answer was, 'at any other time, friend Hopkinson, i would lend to thee freely; but not now; for thee seems to be out of thy right senses'."

Please note, I am not suggesting a prosperity Gospel, collections or anything else by this anecdote other than the passion of a good preacher. If the task of the servant is to nourish then he should do so with all the power that God gives him and he should love that task and do it with a good will. This is an excellent observation by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*:

“The trouble with some of us is that we love preaching, but we are not always careful to make sure that we love the people to whom we are actually preaching. If you lack this element of compassion for the people you will also lack the pathos which is a very vital element in all true preaching. Our Lord looked out upon the multitude and ‘saw them as sheep without a shepherd’, and was ‘filled with compassion’. And if you know nothing of this you should not be in a pulpit, for this is certain to come out in your preaching.”

*Pro 15:17 Better to have a dish of vegetables where there is love than juicy steaks where there is hate. GW.*

Then there is a second important aspect that nourishes the soul, sanctification, the making of the saint. *John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.* Great Saints are not made because of their good works. They are elevated by the Word of God that works in them. The works were planned by God, *Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.* We just walk in the footsteps.

So the final word on prophecy from our Lord is a warning against complacency and dereliction of duty. *Mat 24:48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; Mat 24:49 And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; Mat 24:50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, Mat 24:51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

You have security in obedience but woe if you think that you have security in disobedience.

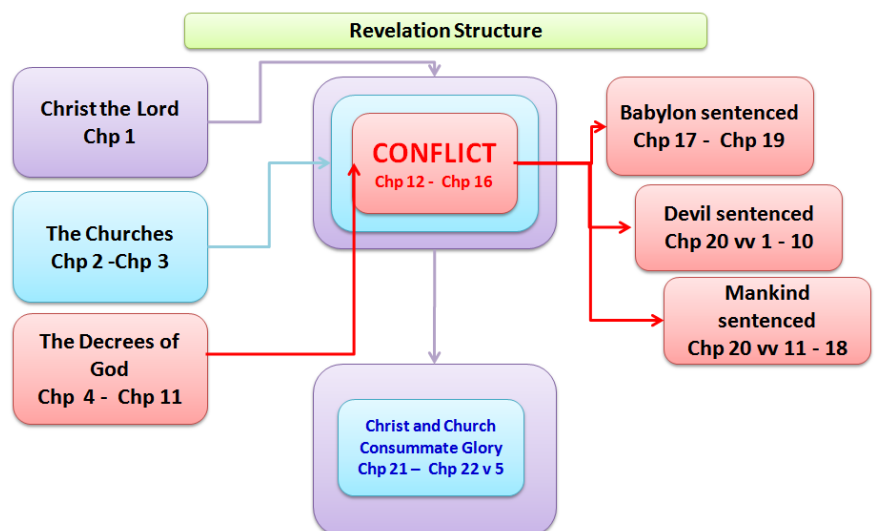
## Chap 39. The Apocalypse – 1. It is all about Jesus

I wish to start by drawing your attention to a structure of the book of Revelation. This is one that I developed a few decades ago and I still think that it is valid. I would not be so arrogant as to say that it is the only structure that you could devise.

The structure looks at the three aspects of the opening chapters of the book,

1. Christ the Lord
2. The Churches
3. The Decrees of God.

The remainder of the book examines how these collide in history and the conflict that arises. This results in 3 judgements for crimes against the Creator.



1. The judgement of the world system, Babylon the great
2. The judgement of the accuser, satan
3. The judgement of unbelieving humanity

The book of Revelation closes with the consummation of the union between Christ and the Saints in Glory, the consummation of the marriage union between Christ and His church.

### Christ the Lord Chp 1

It had not been my intention when I started this series to attempt an exposition of the Book of Revelation. It is still not my intention to do that in great detail but I think that in view of the studies that we have done, we are in a position to make some general observations on John's prophecy. I do so because this book is one which has seized the imagination of many and one which has generated so much controversy and so many diverse interpretations. It has generated disagreement and speculation. Many wiser heads have even passed over it not making any exposition of it at all, so seemingly complex is the material it contains. Yet there it is, part of the Divine council, the Holy Scripture, God's word to us and so we must take it and use it.

I want to suggest a principle at the start of our examination and it is this. **"The book of Revelation will not contradict any other prophetic teachings in the scripture nor any other scripture"**. In other words, I am saying that there is a perfect harmony between what Jesus says and His Apostles say, concerning the events of history as they unfold before our eyes. This principle should be quite obvious to us but it needs to be said because it is one of the foundations of our faith. *2Ti 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God (θεόπνευστος = theopneustos lit. God breathed), and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 2Ti 3:17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

The scripture is "God breathed". The scripture makes the claim that it is not of human origin. This view however, was contested by men who became known as the "Higher Critics" and who historically contributed to the religious "downgrade" in the UK and the world. Coupled with the evolutionary views of Darwin, it created a world view that could dispose of God for good. They all spoke with the serpents tongue, "Yea hath God said?"

Regarding the views of the Continental (higher) Critics<sup>31</sup>, three things can be confidently asserted of nearly all, if not all, of the real leaders.

1. They were men who denied the validity of miracles, and the validity of any miraculous narrative. What Christians consider to be miraculous they considered legendary or mythical; "legendary exaggeration of events that are entirely explicable from natural causes."
2. They were men who denied the reality of prophecy and the validity of any prophetic statement. What Christians have been accustomed to consider prophetic, they called dexterous conjectures, coincidences, fiction, or imposture.
3. They were men who denied the reality of revelation, in the sense in which it has ever been held by the universal Christian Church. They were avowed unbelievers of the supernatural.

<sup>31</sup> [https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/torrey\\_ra/fundamentals/01.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/torrey_ra/fundamentals/01.cfm)



I mention this because it is essential that we examine our view of Divine revelation. Do we accept that the words in our Bible are of Divine origin, that they are the truth of God and that they are an accurate historical record of events that they portray? *Joh 5:46 For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. Joh 5:47 But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?* I accept that they are and because of this belief in the Divine authorship, it follows that the character of God will not lie to us but lead us consistently in all truth. The scripture is a complete body of literature that cannot be untied or loosed, *Joh 10:34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? Joh 10:35 If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and **the scripture cannot be broken** (λύω = luō loosed).*

This means that you have no right to split scriptures apart into ones that you want and ones that you do not. You have no right to believe some and not others. You cannot say I will have these but not these. Scripture is like the priestly garment of Christ, *Joh 19:23 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now **the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.** Joh 19:24 They said therefore among themselves, **Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it.** If you start to pull it apart it will completely unravel. You have no right to reject the integrity of God's word and I say that if you do, then you do not have the spirit of Christ. *John 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and **he will shew you things to come.****

The scriptures are "one truth", the all embracing word of God that brings life and enlightenment. It cannot be untied or loosed and so what is said in one place will not disagree with what is said in another place. What Jesus says in the gospels will be confirmed in the epistles. The prophecies of the gospels, the prophecies of the epistles will all harmonise with the prophecy of the book of John's Apocalypse. The "little" Apocalypse of the Gospel that we have just studied will harmonise with the Apocalypse of John. I emphasise this to make the point that if this is not so, you can make no sense whatsoever out of the prophetic writings.

So that is my first point, that there will be no contradiction between John's Revelation and any other scriptures. We may find it difficult to make the joins, align the ideas, harmonise the terms, work out the symbolism, interpret the imagery but that is down to our ignorance. We are always in error when the scriptures are in darkness to us but scripture is never ever wrong.

I now make another very important point. It relates to how we approach the book of Revelation. It is generally used as a series of proof texts for certain ideas and beliefs. For example, the term "Millennium" occurs only in the 20<sup>th</sup> Chapter and nowhere else in the Bible. Yet this word has spawned a whole series of ideas in respect of where Christ's returns in relationship to it. Does He come before, during or after the Millennium or are we in the Millennium? All of these ideas of course come **without** any absolutely definitive idea as to what the "Millennium" is. It is not used anywhere else in scripture. It is a speculative term that relates to a series of associated events:

1. The angel comes down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.
2. The binding of the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and satan.
3. The casting of satan into the abyss so that he should deceive the nations no more.

4. The loosing of satan after the millennium.
5. The martyrs reigning with Christ a thousand years.
6. The first resurrection participants reigning with Christ.

Whatever the “Millennium” is, it has to be harmonised with these realities. Now, as I said, the Apocalypse of John is often used as a set of proof texts relating to some very obscure issues. Does it not make sense, therefore, to come to an understanding about the purpose and structure of the book before we jump in and start drawing conclusions as to what it means? So firstly, what is the purpose of the book? I believe that all of the books in our Bible have purpose and that is one of the first things we must understand to be able to get the full benefit of the writing. John always writes with purpose.

- *Joh 20:30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: Joh 20:31 **But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.***
- *1Jn 2:26 These things have I written unto you **concerning them that seduce you.***
- *2Jn 1:5 And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, **but that which we had from the beginning**, that we love one another. 2Jn 1:6 And this is love, that we walk after his commandments.*
- *3Jn 1:2 Beloved, I wish above all things that **thou mayest prosper and be in health**, even as thy soul prospereth.*
- *Rev 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, **to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass**; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:*

So here in the Apocalypse, the book of Revelation, we learn in the very first verse a great truth. That is, it is in fact **NOT** the Revelation of John. It is the revelation, **the apocalypse of Jesus Christ**. It is something to do with revealing Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the anointed Saviour of the world.

In order to understand the nature of the “revelation” or “apocalypse” we need to understand the meaning of the word and that we do by seeing its usage in other contexts. The word “revelation” can be transliterated as apokalupsis (ἀποκάλυψις) and it has a range of meanings, such as disclosure, appearing, coming, lightening, manifesting and revealing.

- *Luk 2:32 A light (φῶς = phōs = shine) **to lighten** (ἀποκάλυψις) the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.*
- *Rom 8:19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the **manifestation** (ἀποκάλυψις) of the sons of God.*
- *1Co 1:7 So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the **coming** (ἀποκάλυψις) of our Lord Jesus Christ:*
- *Gal 1:12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the **revelation** (ἀποκάλυψις) of Jesus Christ.*
- *1Pe 1:7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the **appearing** (ἀποκάλυψις) of Jesus Christ.*

We need to consider whether we are dealing with this “revelation” as subjective or objective. By that I mean, is the revelation about Jesus or is it from Jesus? I suggest that it is both. It is a revelation from our Lord and a revelation about our Lord. *1Pe 1:13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at **the revelation of Jesus Christ***; That is about Jesus. *Gal 1:11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. Gal 1:12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by **the revelation of Jesus Christ***. That is, from Jesus.

So here is what I think John is telling us in the first verse of his prophecy. I will paraphrase it. It is a manifestation of Jesus Christ, unwrapped if I may use the term and made manifest in a way that we did not see Him in his incarnation. It is a new light shone upon his person, an enlightenment for His servants, to show them “things”. It is further a glimpse into a realm that we are not privy to through our own senses but it is unveiled by Christ through the gift of God. It is a look behind the visible scenes of this uncertain life, into the invisible world where there is no uncertainty. It is a glimpse of the powers at work throughout history, the powers of good and the powers of evil. It is all, above all, about the Lord Jesus Christ. I remind you of an observation that we have made and shown on many occasions and that is, **the Bible is a book about Jesus**. Revelation is no exception because it is the revelation of Jesus.

Now you would not think that, when you read or hear what modern interpreters make of the book. You would think that it was all about men and their lives, the lives of neo-Israelites reviving ancient religion, worldly events rotating around mankind culminating in the mother of all battles, Armageddon. There is little focus on the glory of Christ except it be as the last person to arrive at the party, when it is all but over. I say that this view is an abomination. If we read the Revelation of Jesus Christ and we do not see the glory of Christ at every turn, we have not read it aright.

Remember the first principle of interpretation in the first chapter of this study, “Jesus Christ is the focus, the epicentre, the nexus of all prophecy”. By that, we mean that all of the prophecy in scripture can only be fully understood with reference to the person and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus is also the lens through which we should view creation, scripture and history, because their true meaning is only discovered when we enter a relationship with Him as redeemed Sons and Daughters. It is only then that we see with His “eye”. I believe that it is only then that we can have a true world or cosmic view and only then does life have meaning. *Joh 1:4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men*.

That word testimony transliterates to our word Martyr. (Μάρτυρα = marturia) and it means evidence (given judicially or generally) a record, report, testimony or witness. When we view our Lord Jesus we are looking at the reflection of a body of evidence. When Moses wrote about Jesus, Moses was providing evidence for future generations, evidence that would attest to the genuineness of the Messiah. Over time this body of evidence continued to grow, so much so, that by the time the Messiah arrives, his birthplace and mission are public knowledge, at least for those who would look for Him. The Gospels record His genealogy back to Adam and even His ancestors wrote about Him, particularly King David.

Jesus did not arrive unannounced. He was not a stranger who tried to develop a mission on His own. It was the culmination of a plan millennia old. I will come back to this thought because the

“Testimony of Jesus” is according to scripture present throughout history, determining history, making history and finally completing history. The book of Revelation is further revelation about Jesus which puts all of the pieces together throughout history.

*Rev 1:2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of **the testimony of Jesus Christ**, and of all things that he saw. Rev 1:9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for **the testimony of Jesus Christ**. Rev 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went **to make war** with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have **the testimony of Jesus Christ**.*

The devil is waging a war on the testimony of Jesus and the believers. The world is led by the devil and that is the only way that you can explain the evil that men commit. The philosopher CEM Joad was brought back to the Christian faith when he considered the results of the Second World War.

"For years my name regularly appeared with H. G. Wells, Bertrand Russell, and Aldous Huxley as a derider of religion.... Then came the war, and the existence of evil made its impact upon me as a positive and obtrusive fact. The war opened my eyes to the impossibility of writing off what I had better call man's 'sinfulness' as a mere by-product of circumstance.

The evil in man was due, I was taught, either to economic circumstance (because people were poor, their habits were squalid, their tastes undeveloped, their passions untamed) or to psychological circumstances. For were not psychoanalysts telling me that all the regressive, aggressive, or inhibited tendencies of human nature were due to the unfortunate psychological environment of one's early childhood?

The implications are obvious; remove the circumstances, entrust children to psycho-analyzed nurses and teachers, and virtue would reign. I have come flatly to disbelieve all this. I see now that evil is endemic in man, and that the Christian doctrine of original sin expresses a deep and essential insight into human nature."

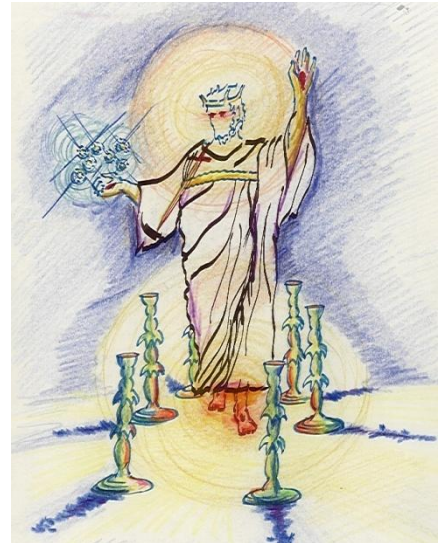
The book of Revelation will show us the unseen powers at work in our world.

## Chap 40. The Apocalypse – 2. Guardians of the Word

### The Churches Chp 2 -Chp 3

I have suggested that the book of Revelation reveals things about Jesus that were not fully revealed in the Gospels, things that are now brought very clearly into focus. One of the most important revelations is the fact that Jesus is Elohim, the Ancient of Days. “O worship the King, all glorious above, O gratefully sing His power and His love; Our shield and defender, the Ancient of Days, Pavilioned in splendour, and girded with praise”. The first chapter of the book reveals this emphatically:

*Rev 1:14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; compare with Dan 7:9 I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.*



*Rev 1:15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. Compare with Eze 43:2 And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory.* We are now being addressed by God Almighty Himself and we shall see His pronouncements on history as they are outworked. The Jesus of the Gospels is now the Lord of Lords. If you ever have a moment when satan attacks you, go straight to this first chapter of this book and look at Jesus.

We began looking at the introduction to the Revelation of Jesus Christ because before we rush to interpret this “Revelation”, we must understand what the purpose of it is and that is set out in the opening three verses.

*Rev 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: Rev 1:2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Rev 1:3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.*

Firstly, the Revelation is to show God’s servants things which must “shortly” come to pass. Τάχος = tachos a brief space (of time), that is, shortly or speedily. If these things were to happen soon, in a time sense, then it did not mean immediately, because they certainly have not happened yet. Other versions express it so: *Rev 1:1 A Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to Him to show to His slaves things which must occur quickly.* LITV. *Rev 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave him so that his servants might have knowledge of the things which will quickly take place:* BBE (Bible in Basic English). The idea is that the events, when they occur, will occur quickly.

John is given the task of the messenger. *Rev 1:2 Who bare record (μαρτυρέω) of the word (λόγος) of God, and of the testimony (μαρτυρία) of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.* Firstly, John has already witnessed the Word incarnate and has recorded it in his Gospel. *Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Joh 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God. Joh 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. Joh 1:4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.* John bears his own testimony of Jesus and is entrusted to bear Jesus’ own testimony.

Secondly, John carries the testimony of Jesus, the record of Jesus, which we can summarise as being the Gospel of Jesus. *Mar 1:1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;* And through Mark’s Gospel we see the person and works of the Saviour which culminate in the great commission, *Mar 16:15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*

*Mar 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

Thirdly, John is entrusted with other revelations, “all things that he saw” and these form the major part of the book. So John has a threefold thread to this book, what he has experienced of Christ in his own life, what Christ has revealed to him about Himself and now, what God the Father has given to him, “*Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass*”. This book of the Revelation is for the benefit of God’s servants. It is, in a manner of speaking, an appendix to the Gospels and Epistles. It is supplementary material at the end of the book providing further explanatory material.

If I might suggest the thought, if we did not have this book, it would not affect our salvation. The Gospels are linked to salvation, *Eph 1:13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, **the gospel of your salvation**: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.* Men were being saved long before the Apostle John penned the Revelation, so it stands apart from that. It stands as a body of truth committed to the saints that within its pages are revealed the eternal purpose of God. It is something given to us, not simply to enjoy but something we must guard with our very being. *Rev 1:3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and **keep (τηρέω = tēreō) those things** which are written therein.* The word keep means to hold fast and is used of keeping a person in prison. *Act 12:5 Peter therefore was kept (τηρέω = tēreō) in prison: Act 12:6 And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept (τηρέω = tēreō) the prison.* Also used of keeping someone safe, *Joh 17:15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep (τηρέω = tēreō) them from the evil.*

Christians are the Guardians of this prophecy, the Guardians of scripture, the Guardians of the Revelation. We are there to keep it safe from those who would destroy it, change it, undermine it and lie about it. We are those who watch over it and declare it to the world and here we show our stamina in not giving it over. *Rev 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. Rev 14:12 Here is the endurance of the saints, who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.* Darby.

It will bring us into conflict with the devil, *Rev 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.* That said, there are those who will be kept from the trials that come upon the world. *Rev 3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*

So let me try and summarise the introduction to the book. The book is an extension of the Revelation of Jesus beyond that which was revealed in the Gospels and Epistles, in so far as it takes us behind the visible realm of this visible reality into the invisible heavenly reality. This book is to be held in trust by the believers with the warning to hold fast, to guard and to keep the truths revealed in it. The believers are the Guardians of this truth. It is perhaps with this in mind that the opening section of the book looks at the relationship between Christ and the body charged with guarding the truth committed to it, the church. Judgement begins at the house of God.

I believe that the Book of Revelation views history from God's vantage point. I remind you of some remarks that we made in an earlier study regarding the words "Lord's day". *Rev 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.* No, it is not a "Sunday" and there is no exegetical evidence to support that idea. We looked at the expression "man's day", *1Co 4:2 and as to the rest, it is required in the stewards that one may be found faithful, 1Co 4:3 and to me it is for a very little thing that by you I may be judged, or by man's day, but not even myself do I judge, YLT.*

Some incorrectly translate it as "man's judgement" rather than "man's day". The original word is "day" not "judgement". It definitely loses some of the sense however, because Paul is saying that it is of little matter to him whether he is judged by the Corinthians or judged by mankind (man's day). This age in which we live is "man's day" and a day under man's judgement. We might then contrast this "man's day" with the day that is the "Lord's day". As "man's day" is associated with the judgements of man, the "Lord's day" is associated with the judgements of God. Not, I would suggest, events that occur on just one day but judgements that occur throughout history.

Where does the judgement start? *1Pe 4:17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?* Within the space of one generation from the resurrection, Jesus confronts the church at the end of the first century with her failures and successes. A word that is given to five of the seven churches is "repent". What is the problem or problems? Is the outreach programme failing? Is the food bank not being run properly by the deacons? Is the "Messy church" or the "Alpha course" failing to impact on the community? Not enough participants for the "shoe box" appeal? Choir not good enough for the Carol service? Not getting enough unbelievers rolling up for the Sunday "worship"? Collections too small? Not enough people tithing? None of these. The problems are not with the works. To each of these seven churches Jesus says, "I know your works", I know what you do. If there are any works that are good, God has set them up in the first place. *Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

The problem is doctrinal. It is how the first century churches and we also, hold the truth and what they and we do with it. They have been infiltrated with ancient heresies (Balaam) and modern ones (Nicolaitans). We cannot say for certain what the latter is, but they knew it then. *Rev 2:14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. Rev 2:15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.*

Then there are false apostles, *Rev 2:2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:* These are the people who claim that they are sent by God and lie about the faith, men like Benny Hinn, who at the Orlando Christian Center (Dec. 31st, 1989) predicted:

"The Lord also tells me to tell you in the mid 90's, about '94-'95, no later than that, God will destroy the homosexual community of America. [audience applauds] But He will not

destroy it - with what many minds have thought Him to be, He will destroy it with fire.  
And many will turn and be saved, and many will rebel and be destroyed."

There are also false prophetesses. *Rev 2:20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.* Sexual malpractice is encouraged and acceptance of idols. This is the development of a compromise with the society in which they live.

Pornography is even being pushed as a human right. In 2009 Sarah McCarthy-Fry, then Schools Minister (UK), said hardcore porn should not be added to a list of banned items, as it might breach the human rights of children. There is also growing evidence that adultery is a tremendous problem in Christian circles. A recent study from Christianity Today shows that 45 per cent of Christians indicate having done something sexually inappropriate, and 23 per cent having extramarital intercourse (Anderson, 2000). These numbers pretty much mirror the national averages. Jezebel is still around today.

There are also the "lukewarm" churches where Christ is outside and not inside, *Rev 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.* We cannot be neutral or indifferent and that is the point at which the dialogue with the seven churches ends. If we are the Guardians of the truth, we cannot expect any sympathy from Christ if we do not care for it.

Five of the seven churches have serious problems with the Lord and the other two are just about hanging in. It is hardly a picture of a glorious body, triumphant over evil in a failing world. Yet I must make an observation here and it relates to how we define "church". As we have said before, it was never a structure built of bricks and mortar. The first building was 200 years into the future from John's day. Logistics dictated using the home for meetings. "Church" is more correctly an assembly of people, a meeting, people who are called and in this definition they are called to represent Christ. The seven churches are defined geographically. They are defined by the cities in which they meet, not by some names such as St Mary's Laodicea, the Assembly of God Philadelphia, or the Ephesus Baptist church. They are defined as "the church in Smyrna", a geographic definition.

Elders were assigned to cities rather than meetings, *Tit 1:5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain **elders in every city**, as I had appointed thee:* I mention this because I think that there are local meetings within a geographic area but that elders are not necessarily specifically and permanently assigned to a single meeting place. I think that there is evidence to show that although "the church" may be defined geographically, it does not mean that there is only one gathering in that geographic locality.

For example, Paul writes to the saints in Rome, *Rom 1:7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.* Yet this is not a single gathering of saints in Rome. *Rom 16:3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Rom 16:4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Rom 16:5 **Likewise greet the church that is in their house.** Salute my wellbeloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ. Rom 16:6 Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us. Rom 16:7 Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my*



*fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. Rom 16:8 Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord. Rom 16:9 Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. Rom 16:10 Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are **of Aristobulus' household**. Rom 16:11 Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of **the household of Narcissus**, which are in the Lord. Rom 16:12 Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord. Rom 16:13 Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. Rom 16:14 Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and **the brethren which are with them**. Rom 16:15 Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, **and all the saints which are with them**. Multiple gatherings in a city.*

I suggest that there were multiple gatherings in a location but it is viewed as one church. An essential unity. So when you consider and try to picture these seven churches of Revelation, perhaps you should not view them as a single meeting in one place in the city but rather as gatherings of believers. This will also explain to some extent how not all believers in a city are personally condemned, *Rev 2:24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, **as many as have not this doctrine**, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden*. These cities still had faithful gatherings.

If this is correct, then it leads to another consideration. Local assemblies are there, in a geographic location, to represent Christ not a denomination. Local assemblies exist to serve Christ and the cause of Christ. They exist to stand for the truth of Christ, not to serve their own purposes and become the most popular group of believers, in competition with other local groups. It is not about competition it is about faithfulness. Whether you like it or not, the angel addresses “the church at” a particular location, not “the churches”. It is a message to all believers and whether you think you go to the best meeting and the group over the road are not as good as you, you are linked with them because you both make a profession of faith in Christ. You are there to uphold the cause of Christ not your own style of meeting. The spiritual issues where you live are a shared responsibility, even if the others do not recognise them as important. We answer to God as individuals not as assemblies but we have a corporate duty to uphold Christ and in that we should be unified.

Has anything changed from those times? Yes, I think it has. Assemblies today do not spend much time examining themselves “whether they be in the faith” because they are looking out of the window, not into the congregation. Assemblies assume that they are right and that whatever they inherited from the previous generation must be right also. Perhaps they should ask if the Lord has stopped talking to them altogether.

Yet despite the failure of some churches as a body, corporate failure, none the less, it is no cause to give up at the personal level. Yes, some meetings will suffer loss and their lights will dim and sputter out but there is always the opportunity to overcome, to be a victor, to be a conqueror. To each one of these seven churches is given a message of hope and it is for individuals within those churches. Seven times the encouragement rings out, “**to him that overcometh**”. Our personal relationship with our Saviour is paramount and our first allegiance is to Him and Him alone. If we put the local church above Him, then we will be cast aside.

In our present evil world, the Revelation of Jesus Christ gives us some magnificent images to draw comfort, inspiration and strength from. We have in the first chapter our glorious King and Lord,

unbowed, and triumphant. In the second and third chapters we have the King's words to His people, urging them on to be victors, more than conquerors. If we are ever downcast, open this drawer of treasures and enjoy the promised rewards that He gives to us unworthy souls. Imagine how John the Apostle was lifted from his captivity to the splendour of Heaven, how must he have felt to see all of this unfolding before His eyes. Christ triumphant evermore.

## Chap 41. The Apocalypse – 3. The Decrees of God

So far we have examined the person of Christ as revealed in the first chapter of the Book of Revelation. We have also examined the churches' relationship with Christ under the messages to the 7 churches. Today we examine Christ and the "Decrees of God".

The Westminster Confession and Catechisms were written (1642-1647) to provide a means of studying sound doctrine. The Westminster Assembly, a synod of English and Scottish theologians and laymen intended to bring the Church of England into greater conformity with the Church of Scotland. The Westminster Shorter Catechism asks under question 7: **What are the decrees of God?** The answer is given: The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.

The confession offers proofs of this statement. *Psalm 33:11. The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, **the thoughts of his heart** to all generations. Isaiah 14:24. The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely **as I have thought**, so shall it come to pass; and **as I have purposed**, so shall it stand: Acts 2:23. Him, being delivered by the **determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God**, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Ephesians 1:11-12. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, **being predestinated according** to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.*

I think that the best proof of the Decrees of God is here in Revelation and I will suggest that the next section of the book of Revelation Chapters 4 to 11, deals with the decrees of God. It deals with Christ unleashing history and its judgements but history that is already written.

### The Decrees of God Chp 4 - Chp 11

The scene is set in chapter 4, the scene of Christ in His majesty. It is the great assembly, the Divine Parliament, the Senate of the Almighty and Christ Himself presides. The rainbow around Him a symbol of the covenant. *Gen 9:16 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember **the everlasting covenant** between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.*

Around Him sits His rulers and the Cherubim which we have seen in the OT. *Eze 10:14 And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of a cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle. (cf Eze 1:10 As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.) Isa 37:16 O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth.*

I will state what I think they are and suggest you study it further for yourself.

1. The creatures are living (i.e. characterising LIFE).
2. They show 4 divisions of creation.
3. They have an intimate relationship to the throne of God.
4. They accompany Christ.
5. They display worship.
6. They show the attributes of omniscience (eyes), and omnipotence (wheels and wings).
7. They bear the throne (rule).
8. They function under the SPIRIT.
9. They exhibit holiness and maintain holiness (cf Gen 3 v 24).
10. They guard the holiness of God in the tabernacle.



I will point out that there is no single fixed description of the Cherubim and they appear in slightly different forms whenever they appear, which makes me think that they are symbolic manifestations. So, here John ascends to heaven and is invited to go through a doorway to witness this great Council of Christ. As His elders cast their crowns at His feet, as they pass their glory over to Him, the absolute Sovereignty of God is declared once more, *Rev 4:11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: **for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.***

You will note the total absence of evil powers as the scene unfolds. Where are the devil and his angels in all that unfolds? Where are the Principalities and Powers that we fight against? They are not in this gathering but we shall see them later.

There is only one person who can unlock the seals of God's decrees that have been written in eternity. This book (βιβλος = biblos properly the inner bark of the papyrus plant, hence a sheet or scroll of writing, a book) has already been completed. It is not a decree that requires discussion or amendment as if its purpose might change. It just requires enacting, putting into operation. Things have been written in this book and there are activities and actions written that can only come to pass when the seal on the scroll is broken, when, to use a more modern analogy, the switch is turned on. The purpose of the seal is to make sure that the writings are not tampered with in transit, as in *1Ki 21:8 So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, dwelling with Naboth.*

This book of the decrees of God is given to Christ to open, as the lamb slain. *Rev 5:6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, **stood a Lamb as it had been slain**, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.* This shows that the decrees of God were determined to include the death of His Son before the world was made, *1Pe 1:20 Who verily was **foreordained before the foundation of the world**, but was manifest in these last times for you* *Rev 13:8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb **slain from the foundation of the world.*** The death of Christ was a fact from Creation forward.

All of this shows that there was not one element of uncertainty in the Divine plan and we should draw strength from this great truth. There is no chance of a mistake and so certain and sure are the outcomes that they are written here for us to enjoy. We can bask in the comfort of certainty, we can recline on His bosom and lie down in the green pastures of His providence for not one thing shall fail to come to pass. This O Lord will strengthen us in dark days.

The question may be asked, does the opening of the seals of God's decrees refer to things to come or does it also encompass things that have happened and are to come? The statement of the 1<sup>st</sup> verse of the 4<sup>th</sup> Chapter, does not preclude this, *Rev 4:1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.* What is seen in this chapter is not something that is only in our future, for we shall have seen glimpses of it in the prophets of Israel. Indeed, the horsemen that are loosed (Rev Chapter 6) were at work in the OT. *Zec 1:8 I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white. Zec 1:9 Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these be. Zec 1:10 And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth.*

From his timeless vantage point in heaven, John watches history unfold as the Lion-Lamb removes the seals and the decrees of God are let loose. As we have said, the dear soul John must have been greatly comforted by what he saw.

When we see what unfolds as the seals are released in chapter 6, it is similar to what we have seen in Matthew 24. *Mat 24:6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. Mat 24:7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. Mat 24:8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.* As we observed, these are facts of history for every generation of mankind and as we have noted before, "Of the past 3,400 years, humans have been entirely at peace for 268 of them, or just 8 percent of recorded history".

What are we to make of these horsemen that Christ releases upon the world? Where do we place these in relation to the Principalities and Powers, *Eph 6:12 .... the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* I make this observation about evil and the power of the devil. **It is limited** and it is controlled by Christ who has "the keys of death and hell". The devil, satan, could not touch Job without permission, *Job 1:12 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.*

In ordinary circumstances the devil has no power over believers other than that which they give him. *1Pe 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: 1Pe 5:9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. Jas 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

The devils were subject to Christ. *Mat 8:29 And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? Mar 1:23 And*

*there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, Mar 1:24 Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. Mar 1:25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. Luk 10:18 And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Luk 10:19 Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Luk 10:20 Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.*

Christ the Lord, the King uses the Principalities and Powers to bring mankind to judgement and to consider its state before God. Yet despite the obvious signs that there is something fundamentally wrong in the soul of mankind, mankind continues to look elsewhere for the causes of his woes. He invents a world view to explain his predicament. He attributes terrorism to global warming, he attributes poverty to wars not human greed, he attributes wars to ideology not the lust of the flesh such is his blindness. He does not understand that his nature has been subjected to the devil and the woes that come upon men are the product of his own sinful heart and imagination. The horsemen of the apocalypse ride through the world and the hearts of men.

We do not see most of the horrors that occur in this life as a direct result of demonic activity. By that I mean, we do not see the evil that happens in the world being brought about directly by devils killing people, starving people, maiming people and destroying the infrastructure. I am not saying that they cannot do it, they can, *Job 1:16 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee..... Job 1:18 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: Job 1:19 And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.* There is the suggestion that satan could use the powers of nature to destroy man and property and smite Job with boils.

However, because he is a deceiver and a liar, satan hides behind his actions and provokes men to conduct his evil. *Jas 4:1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of **your lusts that war in your members?*** When Jesus rebukes the Pharisees, He observes that they are motivated by the lusts of the devil. *Joh 8:44 **Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.** He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.*

Human beings are the devils tools through which he operates to destroy the works of God. When we read, *Rev 6:4 And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon **to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another:** and there was given unto him a great sword.* We are looking at the operation of a power working in the hearts of men so that they kill each other. Remove man and the devil does not have a platform to operate from. Whether they are Kings, Presidents, Prime ministers or citizens, they are all, whatever their politics, run over and through by the horsemen of the Apocalypse.

In his book "The Holy War", dear John Bunyan tells of the city of Mansoul, which represents the soul of man. It is under attack by Diabolus, who represents satan. The city is deceived to follow satan in much the same manner as in the Garden of Eden. The ensuing chapters trace God's operations to regain the city. This is an epic story of good against evil. The town of Mansoul is designed in the image of the Almighty, Shaddai, and is the target of the deceptive and malevolent giant, Diabolus. After the city turns back to God, Diabolus attacks again to try to conquer once more. All aspects of life, attitudes, and character are represented by names, such as Mr. Hard-Heart and Mr. Carnal-Security. Mansoul is a city of five gates: the Ear-Gate, Eye-Gate, Mouth-Gate, Nose-Gate and Feel-Gate. The first and most strategic gate is the first gate breached: the Ear-Gate. The devil gets to us through our senses.

Of the four horsemen, I think that the first horse is different from the others. It is a white horse. *Rev 6:2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.* We see a more detailed description later on, *Rev 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.* I believe that it is Christ.

Christ too rides through the lives of men. He has done so from the beginning and He has killed the devil in the hearts of many men. He has conquered evil in the lives of His chosen people. The decrees of God will work not only in the unregenerate hearts but they will also work to redeem the elect. *1Pe 1:2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.*

Only thus can there be any assurance and security in our salvation, because it is all of God's grace and through His Decrees.

## Chap 42. The Apocalypse – 4. The elect 144,000

After the opening of the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal we are given a view of God's people who must be sealed, marked or preserved before the destructions come to pass. *Rev 7:3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.* This is the decree of predestination to life. *Eph 1:4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Eph 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, Eph 1:6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.* When the Lord chose the Israel of God under the first Covenant, He also chose the Israel of God under the New Covenant. They are one body in Jesus Christ saved by the same precious blood.

The sealing of the servants in chapter 7 reveals two groups of believers but one body. Both Jews and Gentiles are represented. The Jews symbolically according to their tribes. *Rev 7:4 And I heard the number of those having been sealed: one hundred forty four thousands, having been sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel: Rev 7:5 Out of the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand having been sealed. Out of the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand having been sealed. Out of the tribe of Gad, twelve thousand having been sealed. Rev 7:6 Out of the tribe of Asher, twelve thousand having been sealed. Out of the tribe of Naphtali, twelve thousand having been sealed. Out of the tribe of*

*Manasseh, twelve thousand having been sealed. Rev 7:7 Out of the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand having been sealed. Out of the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand having been sealed. Out of the tribe of Issachar, twelve thousand having been sealed. Rev 7:8 Out of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve thousand having been sealed. Out of the tribe of Joseph, twelve thousand having been sealed. Out of the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand having been sealed.*

The gentiles or nations are shown as a great multitude. *Rev 7:9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations (ἔθνος = ethnos foreign (non-Jewish), Gentile), and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; I say that the Jews are symbolically represented, because the tribes listed are not the original 12 (Gen 49). Dan is missing and the half tribe Manasses added. Judgement (Dan) has been replaced by Forgetfulness (Manasses). Isa 43:25 I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.*

If we were dealing with a literal 144,000 then Dan (and Ephraim) are not among the redeemed. The perfection of the numbers (12,000 x 12) also suggests a symbolic completeness and symmetry and so I suggest that we are looking at the people of God under the first covenant safely gathered. They are not all who will be saved and we see the gentiles in numbers that cannot be reckoned, brought to glory. They, the Israelites of Old Testament and the Israelites of the New Testament, all stand together before the throne of God. It is a great multitude from all nations (Gentiles), tribes, peoples and tongues and so embraces the nation of Israel also. This is one people, this is "ALL ISRAEL", the Israel of God. The old are merged with the new.

Now let me jump forward to Revelation 14 where the 144,000 are mentioned again. *Rev 14:1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on **the mount Sion**, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.* Is this the same 144,000 as mentioned in chapter 7? My view is that it does not refer to just the tribes of earthly Israel because it is a symbolic number. *Heb 12:22 But **ye are come unto mount Sion**, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels.* According to Hebrews, we have already come to mount Sion.

If you have spoken to Jehovah's Witnesses, you will know that they hold a view that the 144,000 are the JW's who will reign with Christ in heaven and the other JW's inherit the earth. They seem to associate the 144,000 as those who are born again. Of course they have a difficulty with the literal interpretation that these JW's must be Israelites, men and virgins. I have said it before and I will repeat it again now. Never in the New Testament, is it suggested by the Apostles that there are two groups of believers. An earthly group and a heavenly group. Believers are addressed as one group and it is with great effort that the Apostles encourage this singular unity. It is a unity IN CHRIST, one body in one place, gathered together, heavenly and earthly, one people, one bride.

- *Gal 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Gal 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for **ye are all one in Christ Jesus.***
- *Eph 1:9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: Eph 1:10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times*



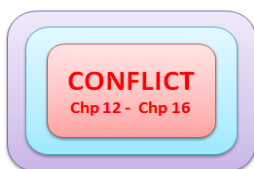
he might **gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth**; even in him: Eph 1:11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

- Rev 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. Rev 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, **prepared as a bride adorned for her husband**. Rev 21:3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, **and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people**, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

We find that after the seals are opened, there follows a sequence of trumpets. Are the seals and the trumpets two views of the same thing? Does the opening of the “seals” mean that the events are revealed but not set in motion? Do the trumpets indicate that the process is in motion? It is possible. One of the great trumpet sequences in history occurred at Jericho but it occurred after the plan was conceived and the land spied out, in fact before the Jordan had been crossed. There followed a sequence of seven trumpets. Jos 6:4 And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. Jos 6:5 And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.

The trumpet presaged judgement and it presaged freedom. Lev 25:8 And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years. Lev 25:9 Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubile to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. So it is that when the judgements are completed, the people of God are freed forever. Rev 11:15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

My suggestion is then, that the events shown in Chapters 4 to 11 represent the decrees of God as He rolls out history and its associated judgements. This is one view of history. We now turn to another view of history as it relates to God's own people and how they conflict with the world and the devil.



Please read chapters 12 to 16

Rev 12:1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: Rev 12:2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered..... Rev 12:5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule (shepherd) all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

The identity of the child is clear from the Psalms and its usage in the New Testament. Psa 2:7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, **Thou art my Son**; this day have I begotten thee. Psa 2:8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Psa 2:9 **Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron**; thou shalt dash them in pieces like



*a potter's vessel. Act 13:33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. The child is the Messiah and He rules as risen Lord, He is the stone that breaks the feet of clay.*

Who is the woman? This is less obvious and to start with, I will discount the virgin Mary and suggest that the woman is symbolic as the mother of the faithful *Rev 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with **the remnant of her seed**, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

I would contrast this woman with the whore of Babylon, the mother of the unfaithful. *Rev 17:1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: ..... Rev 17:3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. .... Rev 17:6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. Rev 17:7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. Rev 17:8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. .... Rev 17:13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. Rev 17:14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful. Rev 17:15 And he saith unto me, **The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.***

The whore of Babylon is the world's system and sits upon the waters of humanity, the kingdom of earth, the kingdom of men. She is the world's creed, culture and religion, the world of greed, avarice, slavery and the persecution of the people of God. The woman of Revelation 12 is crowned with the stars of heaven and stands above the earth and moon and symbolises Jerusalem which is above, the kingdom of Heaven *Gal 4:26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.* We bear the image of the heavenly, *1Co 15:49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.* We have been delivered from Babylon and Babylon hates us.

There are some similarities between the description of "the woman" and the dream of Joseph. *Gen 37:9 And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. Gen 37:10 And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?* Joseph's dream embraced deliverance of God's chosen people and in a sense this is the symbolic role of the woman.

The Older Testament symbolism can also be seen in the deliverance of Israel from Egypt and the journey to the promised land. *Rev 12:6 The woman ran into the desert to a place that God had prepared for her. There she would be taken care of for one thousand two hundred sixty days.* CEV. God fed the Israelites the manna from heaven, which we see was typical of Jesus. *Joh 6:31 Our fathers did eat manna in the*

*desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Joh 6:32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. Joh 6:33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Christ alone sustains us in the desert of this world.*

We see that heaven was purged of satan by the redemptive work of Christ and now has his abode on earth, *Rev 12:7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, Rev 12:8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. Rev 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.* This was the work of Christ. *Joh 12:31 Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. Luk 10:18 And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.* Satan is the god of this world, or more properly, the god of this age. *2Co 4:4 In whom the god of this world (age) hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

The conflict between the woman representing the believers and the whore of Babylon is further highlighted by the mark that they are given in the eyes of God. *Rev 14:1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. Cf. Eze 9:4 And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. Cf. Rev 13:16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: Rev 13:17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Rev 13:18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.*

Do these marks confer any blessing or curse upon the recipient? We are reminded of the mark of Cain, *Gen 4:15 And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.* The choices that we make in this life tattoo us for eternity.

The section that we are examining, chapters 12 to 16, concludes with the final plagues upon humanity and the beginning of the final judgements. I have deliberately avoided going into details but I will conclude this ministry with some general observations.

Much of the imagery used in the book of Revelation has its origin in the past, in the Older Testament and in God's earthly dealings with Israel.

Elizabeth Coles comparison table of the plagues of Egypt shows how they are also mirrored in Revelation.

Likewise, we have seen the image that men were to worship appear before in the time of Nebuchadnezzar. We see the Cherubim, the people of God nourished in the wilderness, Babylon the great and symbols of Israel's worship and the Temple.

Order in Exodus	Plague in Exodus	Scripture Reference	In Revelation	Scripture Reference
1 <sup>st</sup>	Water turned into blood	Exodus 7:14-24	A third of the sea turned to blood	Revelation 8:8
			The two witnesses have the power to turn water into blood	Revelation 11:6
			Sea, rivers, springs turn to blood	Revelation 16:3-4
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Frogs	Exodus 7:25-8:11	Three unclean spirits like frogs	Revelation 16:13
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Gnats	Exodus 8:12-15	<i>No mention of a plague of gnats in Revelation</i>	
4 <sup>th</sup>	Flies	Exodus 8:15-28	<i>No mention of a plague of flies in Revelation</i>	
5 <sup>th</sup>	Pestilence (livestock disease)	Exodus 9:1-7	<i>No mention of a plague of pestilence in Revelation: But livestock may die off if crops ruined (Revelation 6:8 famine) and food too expensive (Revelation 6:6)</i>	
6 <sup>th</sup>	Boils	Exodus 9:8-12	Festering, ugly sores	Revelation 16:2, 11
7 <sup>th</sup>	Hail and lightning	Exodus 9:13-35	Lightning hurled to earth	Revelation 8:5
			Hail and fire mixed with blood	Revelation 8:7
			Hailstones like huge weights	Revelation 16:21
8 <sup>th</sup>	Locusts	Exodus 10:1-20	Locusts	Revelation 9:3-11
9 <sup>th</sup>	Darkness	Exodus 10:21-29	Darkness (one-third)	Revelation 8:12
			Kingdom of the beast plunged into darkness	Revelation 16:10
10 <sup>th</sup>	Death of the First-born by the Destroying Angel	Exodus 11:1-10, 12:29-30	Death of one-third of the human race by the four angels of death	Revelation 9:13-19

Table created by Elizabeth Cole, September 25, 2011

Scripture references from New American Bible

I give you an opinion that the Revelation of Christ is the spiritual fulfilment of the believer's conflict. I do not think that we should expect to see literal fulfilments on earth, such as unclean spirits like frogs, or locusts literally appearing. I do believe that there will be spiritual manifestations that answer to these things. There is a principle to suggest this, *1Co 15:46 Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.*

The battle, I reiterate, is against Principalities and Powers in heavenly places. It is real but it is not visible to the natural eye, it is a spiritual battle that spills out in the lives of mankind and the evil they inflict on each other. What they do not realise is that the victory over evil is a foregone conclusion.

DV we shall bring this overview of Revelation to a conclusion as we examine the judgements of God.

## Chap 43. The Apocalypse – 5. The fall of Babylon and the devil

I remind us that the judgements that we shall examine today are a consequence of Christ's victory. I remind us also and again, that prophecy and history can only be correctly understood with reference to Jesus Christ, the Creator Redeemer. His testimony is the Spirit of Prophecy.

### Babylon sentenced Chp 17 - Chp 19

*Rev 18:1 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. Rev 18:2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. Rev 18:3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.*

The question that we must ask is “Who or what is Babylon the Great”? Is it a real person? Is it a place a country? Is it an ideology or a culture? I have suggested that much of the imagery in Revelation has been encountered in our readings of the Older Testament and Babylon is no exception. To understand Babylon we must go back into the Old Testament to see her foundations and origin. The city was ruled and probably founded by a man called Nimrod, the great grandson of Noah. *Gen 10:9 He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD. Gen 10:10 And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. Gen 10:11 Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah.*

It is said that the Assyrians deified Nimrod, and placed him among the constellations of heaven, and called him Orion, the hunter (with Sirius his hunting dog). It may also be that Nimrod was the same as Gilgamesh the hero of “The Gilgamesh epic” which contains a Flood narrative. Nimrod also founded Nineveh, to which the reluctant prophet Jonah would be sent and Nimrod laid the foundation for the Empire of Nebuchadnezzar, who would be Israel’s nemesis.

Jewish tradition records that Nimrod was made king over all the people on earth, appointing Terah his minister. It was then, elated by so much glory, that Nimrod changed his behaviour toward Jehovah and became the most flagrant idolater. When informed of Abraham’s birth he requested Terah to sell him the new-born child, in order that he might kill it (see Jew. Encyc. i. 86a, s.v. Abraham in Rabbinical Literature). Terah hid Abraham and in his place brought to Nimrod the child of a slave, which Nimrod dashed to pieces. Nimrod is generally considered to have been the one who suggested building the Tower of Babel and who directed its construction. The Jews recorded in their traditions that God said: “I made Nimrod great; but he built a tower in order that he might rebel against Me” (Hul. 89b). The tower is called by the Rabbis “the house of Nimrod.”

Whatever the background history, Babylon is remembered as the place where tongues were confused. *Gen 11:9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.* Whereas Babylon was established to unify mankind, it became the place where mankind was dispersed. This is reversed at Pentecost where languages are united in the message of the Gospel and believing humanity is one again in Christ.

The purpose of the construction of Babylon was clear. It was to make a way for men to get to heaven and a place to challenge God. *Gen 11:3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime (bitumen/asphalt) had they for mortar. Gen 11:4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.*

The inhabitants of Babylon wanted to have a memorial to themselves, a name by which to be remembered, not a name that God would give them. *Isa 56:4 For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; Isa 56:5 Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a **place and a name** (yad v’shem) better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Isa 56:6 Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him,*

*and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant;*

Yad Vashem, 'a place and a name', 'a memorial and a name' as you will know, is the name of the Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem. The word 'yad' means a hand or a signpost, hence memorial. God gives His believing people a memorial and a name. We do not need to make one because we have His Name but this is what the Babylonians rejected and so set out make their own name. They had discarded Jehovah in order to set up their own gods and this is the reason that they were scattered. It goes further, because it is not just giving up the knowledge of God, it is perverting it with other beliefs, hence 'whoredom' and apostasy go together.

*Jer 3:1 They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD. Jer 3:2 Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lien with. In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast **polluted the land with thy whoredoms** and with thy wickedness.*

This Babylon was a whore from its foundation. It represents the beliefs, culture and practices of a nation without God and came to symbolise a world without God. We are seeing the consequences in our own nation (UK) where a godless leadership is determining our godless beliefs. I read an article this month by James Delingpole. He wrote,

"'When I get married — whether it's to a man or a woman...' my 11-year-old niece told her grandpa the other day. But I don't think she thinks she's a budding lesbian (would she even know at that age?). Its just the way she has been taught to think at her impeccably right-on school in the People's Republic of Brighton.

It reminded me queasily of another niece's experiences — this time at an overwhelmingly white, Christian state school in Worcester. Her dad had wanted to know why when she said 'Mohammed', she automatically added the phrase 'Peace Be Upon Him'. 'Oh, it's what we're taught we have to say in RE,' my niece replied. Did the schools ever consult us on whether we wanted our children's heads to be filled with such politically correct bilge?"

When the state decides upon what is to be believed, those who do not conform must be punished. The beliefs, culture and practices of nations, outwork in how those behave. People behave according to their beliefs. At the heart of Babylon the Great, mother of Harlots, is an anti-Christian, anti-Creator driven system of beliefs. These will in turn incur the judicial punishment of God. *Rom 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, **God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;***

I do not see the judgement of the great whore as something that is especially reserved for the very end of the world. A judgement that other generations in history, like ours today, have managed to escape. We must avoid the tendency to view the book of Revelation as events that only occur at the end of history. A view that sees the sins and crimes of humanity swept up the corridor of history and

laid at the feet of that last generation, to face judgement. It is a view that carelessly held will not see the sins of its own generation and not see that God punishes us in the 'now' not just the future.

The horsemen of the Apocalypse, as we have shown, have been at work in every generation and every generation will suffer the consequence of its ungodliness. If God punishes His own people in their lifetime and in their generation, how much more then the ungodly? God judges people today in the churches and He will certainly do so out of churches. *1Co 11:29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation (judgement) to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 1Co 11:30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.* I know very few believers who truly accept this as being from the hands of their "loving non-judgemental" God. They cannot see how a loving God would do this but just read the history of violence in the last century, through which the horsemen trampled. Who released them? Christ did. Christ is at the centre of history and the centre of judgement.

Nebuchadnezzar, you recall, as king of Babylon, was punished for his arrogance, *Dan 4:29 At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. Dan 4:30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? Dan 4:31 While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. Dan 4:32 And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.*

Belshazzar, his successor did not learn the lesson either and he added blasphemy to arrogance. *Dan 5:20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: Dan 5:21 And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will. Dan 5:22 And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this;*

Babylon became the nemesis of apostate Israel and in turn was judged. So in the opening judgements at the close of the book of Revelation, we see firstly, the world's system judged. It is not just people who are firstly condemned, it is the system under which they operate that is first condemned and this lays the foundation for the judgement of its practitioners. *Rev 18:11 And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: Rev 18:12 The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, Rev 18:13 And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. Rev 18:14 And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.* Will you weep for Babylon? If you want a priority check about where you are standing in this life go and read Matthew Chapter 6.

**Devil sentenced  
Chp 20 vv 1 - 10**

Next in line for judgement is the deceiver of mankind and in Revelation chapter 20 we see the judgement of satan, the accuser of God's people. *Rev 20:1 And I saw an angel coming down out of Heaven, having the **key of the abyss**, and a great chain on his hand. Rev 20:2 And he laid hold of the dragon, the old serpent who is the Devil, and Satan, and **bound him a thousand years**, Rev 20:3 and threw him into the abyss, and shut him up, and sealed over him, that he should not still lead astray (deceive the nations (Gentiles), until the thousand years are fulfilled. And after these things, he must be set loose a little time. LITV.*

The words 'bottomless pit' is an interpretation because it is one word, "abyss" in the original. Do we consider the 'abyss' as some invisible place beyond our sight and senses? In the Greek translation of the OT, the term "face of the deep" uses the same word that we have here in Revelation, "abyss". *Gen 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. Gen 1:2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep (abyss). And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.* Is the abyss a reference to this very earth, not some ethereal holding pen for satan?

We have read elsewhere, *Rev 9:11 And they have a king over them, the angel of the abyss. In Hebrew his name was Abaddon, and in Greek he has the name Apollyon.* Is this 'the god of the lost', the god of the unbelieving, that Paul tells us about? *2Co 4:3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are **lost**: 2Co 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

I will suggest a simple explanation of what may be happening in Revelation 20. The angel coming from heaven has the power to confine satan and limit his power. The purpose of this is to stop the devil from causing the Gentiles to be deceived. Literally, to stop him from causing the nations to wander (πλανάω= planaō, whence planet). The Gospel of Christ can now go to all Gentiles/Nations because they can no longer be deceived..

It does not say that the devil will cease to operate in the earth, that evil disappears, that wars cease, that famine, death and destruction are put on hold. It does not say that the devil will not be the god of this world or that he cannot create wickedness and tempt believers. The devil is however limited in his ability to deceive the Gentiles.

The Gentiles now have a light in the heavens, the Sun to shine and light their way. This fulfils the scripture, *Isa 9:1 Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in **Galilee of the nations (Gentiles)**. Isa 9:2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: **they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.** We Gentiles are beneficiaries of God's grace through Christ, *Eph 5:8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as **children of light**:**

It is Christ who has the key of the abyss and He who also has the keys of hades and death. He alone has the power and glory. Just remind yourself as you go through this book of Revelation, that it is the Revelation of Christ and we should be seeing the things that He does, His great works. Revelation chapter 20 focuses on Christ's power not satan's. The devil is defeated by Christ and the Gospel is free to run its course among the Gentiles. It is this period that is called the Millennium. *Rev 20:2 And*

he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and **bound him a thousand years**. I suggest that it is a symbolic period, symbolic of Christ's reign before the final judgement.

Those martyrs of Christ reign with Him during the '1000 years', Rev 20:4 *And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and **they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years***. Rev 20:5 *But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. **This is the first resurrection***.

What are we to make of the 'first resurrection'? I will suggest that it is the resurrection in Christ, the transfer of our citizenship to heaven. Eph 2:1 *And you who were dead in trespasses and sins; ..... Eph 2:6 And hath raised us up together, and **made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus***: Is not this what we are seeing in Revelation 20? The saints are sitting with Christ, reigning. This is where we are in Christ and we should live up to it as victors not look at it as something in the future. We have the victory over the devil, let us not use our sinful nature as an excuse for failure. 1Jn 5:4 **For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.** 1Jn 5:5 *Who is he that overcometh the world, but **he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God***?

After this satan is released for a 'micro-time' a little season. Rev 20:8 *And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea*. This would fit with Paul's warning about the 'end', 2Th 2:2 *That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.* 2Th 2:3 *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; ..... 2Th 2:7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.* 2Th 2:8 *And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:*

The devil will be destroyed along with his rebellious cohorts. It is written. Rev 20:9 *And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.* Rev 20:10 *And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

Next time as we conclude our study, we shall look DV, at the final victory of Christ, the culmination of prophecy.



## Chap 44. The Apocalypse – 6. The last judgement and eternal life

**Mankind  
sentenced  
Chp 20 vv 11 - 18**

*Rev 20:11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.*

*Rev 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. Rev 20:13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. Rev 20:14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. Rev 20:15 And **whosoever was not found written in the book of life** was cast into the lake of fire.*

Annihilationism (also known as extinctionism or destructionism) is a belief that the final punishment of human beings results in their total destruction, rather than their everlasting torment. It is directly related to the doctrine of conditional immortality, the idea that a human soul is not immortal unless it is given eternal life. Annihilationism asserts that God will eventually destroy the wicked, leaving only the righteous to live on in immortality, a view held by Seventh day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses.

Now you might think that it is very unloving to punish people for ever. John Stott, the supposed 'evangelical' writer thought so. Quote: "I question whether 'eternal conscious torment' is compatible with the biblical revelation of Divine justice, unless perhaps (as has been argued) the impenitence of the lost also continues throughout eternity." C.S. Lewis said of hell, "There is no doctrine which I would more willingly remove from Christianity than this, if it lay in my power. But it has the full support of Scripture and, specially, of our Lord's own words; it has always been held by Christendom; and it has the support of reason".

Whatever men have said, our views must be governed by the Word of God. Our Lord Himself said of the judgement, *Mat 25:46 And these shall go away into **everlasting punishment**, but the righteous into everlasting life.* Paul writes the same, *2Th 1:7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 2Th 1:8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 2Th 1:9 Who shall be punished with **everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord**, and from the glory of his power;*

There must be a misunderstanding of the seriousness of our crimes against the Creator if we think that He operates as we operate. If we think that the sacrifice of the Son of God is some light matter, some frivolous act of generosity from Him to us, we fail to see the depth of our own depravity. We utterly fail to see how hurtful sin is to the Creator and how deep and enduring its effects are. That separation, if it is not bridged here in time, it will abide forever, based upon the nature of God who cannot deny Himself. *2Ti 2:11 It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: 2Ti 2:12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: 2Ti 2:13 If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: **he cannot deny himself.***

If sin was so bad that it required the sacrifice of the Son of God to redeem us, then the attitude of God to unredeemed sinners remains as long as God does, because man can never redeem himself.

There is no point that we know, at which God softens His stance on sin and says, 'I repent me that I have punished these men'. There is nothing to say that God will change His mind and let men have a second chance to be reconciled with Him, through Christ in some distant future. Death is the end of all hope for the wicked. *Pro 11:7 When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust men perisheth. Pro 11:7 When the wicked die, their hopes die with them.* CEV.

There is no indication that God will show compassion on the wicked by annihilating them, to end their eternal torment. God is merciful but that act of mercy was demonstrated through Christ. If God were to show compassion, mercy without the need for Christ, He would be denying Christ Himself. Once dead a great gulf exists between us and God and it exists forever. Sin separated man from God when it entered the world and there was only one way back from death. *Eze 18:20 The soul that sins, it shall die.* Yet it does not say that the soul that sins shall be annihilated. If it is unredeemed the second death prevails, *"This is the second death."*

If you read the story of the Rich man and Lazarus, you will notice that "in torment"; the rich man makes no plea for his own forgiveness or to be taken out of that place of torment. He does not make his excuses, "I did not know", "I was ignorant", "I am not guilty", "I do not deserve this", "I am sorry", "it was not my fault". Did he recognise the justice meted for his crimes, albeit too late? Perhaps with the sentence that God passes down, comes also with it, the hopeless realisation that nothing can be changed. Hell has writ large upon its gates "mea culpa solus", through my fault alone. They will know it forever and that perhaps is the torment, an eternity without God.

Yet there remained a glimmer of recognition that the place of torment he was now in, could be avoided. There was the recognition that a testimony to his brothers might stop them from coming to the place of torment. But Hell is not allowed to send out its own evangelists, it has no missionaries, neither can it help the living. They have Moses and the Prophets already, it is enough. *Luk 16:31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*

What does eternity mean outside of time? What is the meaning of aeon ((αἰώνιος)? The Greek word can be broken down to mean "always being". In astronomy an aeon is defined as a billion years (10<sup>9</sup> years, abbreviated AE). Learn this verse that Jesus says, *Mat 25:46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.* Affliction for an aeon and life for an aeon. Life and punishment are set in antithesis. If life is eternal, then punishment is eternal. If we live forever with Christ, then the wicked are punished forever without Christ. **If the wicked are not punished forever, we do not have eternal life.**

One more observation on the story of the rich man and Lazarus. The blessings and punishments start at death according to Jesus. There is no waiting room for the day of judgement. Men who die outside of Christ have already been judged, *Joh 3:18 he who is believing in him is not judged, but he who is not believing hath been judged already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* YLT. The great day of Judgement will reveal out of the books, just what men did to deserve their punishment.

That perhaps is the saddest part of the Scripture. All those that we love in this life and who reject Christ will suffer this fate. *2Co 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be*

good or bad. 2Co 5:11 *Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, **we persuade men**; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.* If we truly love people we will do our best as Paul says, to persuade them, to encourage them to trust Christ.

They may never have read the Gospels or Revelation but we have. We know the “terror of the Lord”, the fear of the Lord and that should incentivise us. Rev 16:5 *And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.*

**Christ and Church  
Consummate Glory  
Chp 21 – Chp 22 v 5**

Now we come to the end of the story. As Billy Graham quipped, “I’ve read the last page of the Bible, it’s all going to turn out all right.” Yes it is.

Rev 22:1 *And he shewed me a pure **river** of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.* Rev 22:2 *In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there **the tree of life**, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.* Rev 22:3 *And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:* Rev 22:4 *And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.* Rev 22:5 *And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.* Rev 22:6 *And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.* Rev 22:7 *Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.*

**Compare this with another passage.**

Gen 2:8 *And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.* Gen 2:9 *And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; **the tree of life** also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.* Gen 2:10 *And **a river** went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. ....* Gen 2:15 *And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.* Gen 2:16 *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:* Gen 2:17 *But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*

As I have said before, the Bible has some very simple themes running through its pages. Simple yet profound. Our journey to the end of time takes us from Paradise lost to Paradise regained. Rev 2:7 *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of **the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*** Wherever the tree of life is, there is Paradise. Now, no longer a Paradise on Earth but in Heaven, first the natural, then the spiritual.

Adam and his fallen race were cast out of the garden and died but in Christ are made alive again and in Him are welcome back. The tree of life forbidden in Eden is now in all its glory given to us with its fruits and healing leaves. It is the emblem of everlasting life and to eat of it is to live forever, Gen 3:22 *And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and*

*now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:* The way back to the tree of life was made through the blood of Christ and His life given for us.

The Bible has recorded the battle between good and evil from its first page. There must have been many occasions when the people of God were downcast and despairing but on all of those occasions, the Lord raised up men of God to lead His people. There were the Patriarchs, the Judges, the Prophets and some of the Kings. They all spoke the same thing and all had the same comfort. Through them was delivered encouragement and hope which was fully revealed in the person of the Messiah Jesus of Nazareth. Through His life and death, the powers of evil were overcome and through Him alone the final victory achieved. That is where we have arrived in this study.

I have a few closing remarks as we conclude these studies on Prophecy:.

It has not been my purpose to tell you what to believe. I do hope that we have opened up the subject sufficiently for you to gain an understanding of the principles and approach that we should adopt. It is in many ways a delicate subject and should be handled so. We should not use it as a cause for division and argument and we should be very clear in our own minds, what faith we are defending with our views.

There are a lot of “unknowns” in prophecy but there are also a lot of “knowns”. That is why it has been important to lay down our definitions. First and foremost is the Person and Work of Jesus. If we misunderstand HIM, we shall misunderstand history. This is why, I believe, that the Nation of Israel has become a prominent feature in eschatology (the study of the last times and things). It completely fails to acknowledge the preeminence of Christ and that He Himself is Israel. It is in Him that His people become “the Israel of God”. It is in Him that we are built into a holy Temple (shrine). It is in Him that we have now entered heaven and are seated there.

I have suggested that as we have cursorily examined the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, that we also examine the events of the Prophecy in the light of the work of Christ elsewhere in the scripture. What is written elsewhere will not contradict what is written in Revelation and what we read in Revelation should not be made to contradict what is written elsewhere.

Let us remind ourselves in conclusion of some of the principles that we discerned.

1. The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy (Rev 19:10). Christ is at the heart of prophecy. It is all about Jesus, the whole Bible is about Jesus. We made an observation that many prophecies are “conversation between God”, by which we mean that the writer has recorded that which relates not to earthly things but to heavenly things. For example, *Psa 110:1 A Psalm of David. The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.* David was not talking of Himself.

We must therefore be careful how we attribute some of the statements of Scripture.

2. First the natural and then the spiritual (1 Cor 15:46). We move from the earthly to the heavenly. *1Co 15:21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. 1Co 15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

We must be cautious about interpreting scripture solely in terms of earthly fulfilments. *1Co 15:42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: 1Co 15:43 It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: 1Co 15:44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. 1Co 15:45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.*

3. "Start with the Obvious and work towards the Obscure". By this I mean, start to develop principles of interpretation from the clear and unambiguous texts of scripture. We examined Jesus own words on the end times in Matthew 24 and used these as a template for the interpretation of the more obscure visions of John's book of Revelation.
4. Read the Bible to find Jesus and His works. *Joh 5:39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. Joh 5:40 And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*

We spoke to some people this week who studied their Bible 'religiously' we might say. They wanted to obey God, to live good lives but they did this without the personal knowledge of Christ as Saviour. They had a god without Christ but not the God of the Bible, because the God of the Bible can only be known through Jesus Christ. *Mat 11:27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.*

I suggested to them that they are reading the script but were not in the play, they are watching the film but they are not in it. We are in the film. It is all about Jesus and all about being with Him.

5. I would suggest just one more principle for consideration. If the doctrine has not been around since the start of the New Covenant and has appeared over the last few hundred years, treat it with caution. It is probably as false teaching or exposition. *2Pe 1:3 According as his Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: We have sufficient in Christ.*

For John in his Island prison, the final judgement was yet to come but he saw it and we see it through his eyes. It is the culmination of prophecy, the end of this temporal path, the beginning of a glorious timelessness with Christ. A place without tears, a place without darkness, a place without fear, a place without wars, a place of joy, a place with our new bodies and new activities.

Let John's words be our desire as we close this study.

***Rev 22:20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Rev 22:21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.***